SEVEN MONTHS
WITH
MAHATMA GANDHI

BEING AN INSIDE VIEW OF THE NON-CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT (1921-22)

BY

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Vol I

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Mahatma Gandhi

To

All Lovers of Bapu

PREFACE

The series of events which I have tried to portray cover a period of seven months ending with the incarceration of Mahatma Gandhi in the third week of March, 1922 In perspective these events fall under something like the following heads -

(i) 'Awakening, meaning a political awakening on a mass-scale through the Non-co-operation movement

(ii) 'Preparations', meaning preparations on a mass-scale for a political struggle of a non-violent character

(iii) 'On the March', meaning the progress of the struggle in its critical stages

(iv) 'Halt, meaning the state of abeyance in the struggle, implying a fresh course of preparations

I propose, therefore to divide the whole period covered by 'The Seven Months into a number of Parts, each Part concentrating on one or more of the different phases of the Movement The present volume attempts to give a picture only of the first two phases The succeeding phases will form the subject-matter of another volume to be brought out as quickly as circumstances would permit

The phases of the Movement enumerated above are broad, outstanding divisions In the course of the narrative however, I have thought fit to enter into many a detail which throws into considerable relief the parts played by some of the leading actors In particular I have sought to incorporate many minute incidents and events of Mahatma Gandhi's daily life, otherwise of no special significance

which help to bring into nearer view some vital features of his composition The public are aware of that side of his character which is revealed by the part he has played in the Non-co-operation drama But there also I have tried to throw as much light as possible with the help of facts which came under my special observation These will bring into broader view Mahatma Gandhi's essential attitude in many a crisis in the progress of the Movement

In Mahatma Gandhi's view, for the attainment of Swaraj by Indians, there is no alternative to the Non-violent Non-co-operation method, except of course, the method of modern military warfare, which has proved such a dismal failure in the West, and which unless repudiated betimes will involve the West and modern civilisation in one common ruin There are people in India who incline to the view that there is a *via media* If, indeed, there be one such, their efforts will succeed But Mahatma Gandhi strongly holds the other view If Mahatma Gandhi is right, the Non-violent Non-co-operation Movement will be able to re-assert itself with even greater power, as soon as the newer methods latterly adopted by the Congress have had their full and final trial

Satyagrahashram,
Sabarmati
27th November, 1926

KRISHNADAS

NOTE

This volume having been long overdue and having had to be hurried through the Press, proofs of most of these pages could not be looked over by the author A number of errors have unavoidably, therefore, crept in, but it were useless to enumerate them here in the shape of "errata" The reader, however, would be in a position in most cases to correct them for himself But there are, it appears, a few errors which might present a little difficulty and among these are the following —

Page	*Line*	*For*	*Read*
34	16	constrained	refrained
85	5-6	*omit* out of the train	
132	21	quality	qualify
213	5	contended	contented
257	19	Desai	Mahadev

Lastly, it has to be pointed out that a series of Notes were originally intended to be appended to this volume in the shape of *Appendices* But these have been omitted

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INTRODUCTION

WHILE staying with Mahatma Gandhi I had absolutely no idea of writing a book about him. Towards the end of 1921 when the political firmament of India was overcast with dark clouds, and many of his lieutenants and faithful followers, one by one, were removed from him, some by imprisonment, some by the call of duty elsewhere, it fell to me to assist him in his correspondence and in the editorial work of *Young India*. Then I happened to see all his papers, and had exceptional opportunities of studying at first hand the lines of thought that guided him in conducting the great movement inaugurated by him. It was Mahatmaji's practice to destroy almost all important papers after they had served their purpose and I, too, began to do likewise. Seeing this, a friend one day asked me to preserve all important papers, but I jocosely replied that I was an iconoclast, and not an idolator.

Of course I said this in quite a humorous spirit, for I believe that so long as a man pays homage to some great ideal or aspiration he cannot help being drawn by secret attraction of soul to one in whose exalted personality he finds reflected that ideal and that aspiration. And this is the genesis of Hero worship. Hero-worship has been, and will ever be in this world, and in worshipping the hero we are really worshipping the ideal.

At that time, however, the pressure of daily events and the daily correspondence overwhelmed me so completely that it was simply impossible for me to decide which papers to preserve and which not Moreover, I had no idea at the time that it was at all possible for me (adequately) to give an account of what I saw and felt about this mighty movement

On my return to Bengal a few months after Mahatmaji's incarceration, all my friends were eager to hear of him from me, and some even pressed me to write down my experiences during my stay with him During the seven months that I had the good fortune of living with him, I had kept a regular correspondence with my revered teacher, Shriyut Satis Chandra Mukerji, and as he was anxious to hear from me regularly and in detail all about me, I used to write to him at length about everything Fortunately, he had preserved all my letters with great care, and it was at his instance and under his encouragement, and mainly with the help of those letters, that this book has been written

Those who have intimately associated with Mahatmaji may feel the detailed descriptions in this book somewhat superfluous, and sometimes even repellant But the revolution in the thoughts and feelings of men and the awakening among the masses that Mahatmaji has been able to bring about by the movement of Non co operation, though it has been hailed as unique in the history of the world, may soon in the natural course of time sink into the oblivion of the past And though posterity may be eager to know and understand the intensity and magnitude of the movement and the awakening by it, no definite picture of the same may be available at that time The basic principles of Non-co-

operation have, indeed, been explained and discussed in many a book, and Mahatmaji's own writings will remain for ever the supreme authorities on the subject. But the story of the wonderful upheaval among the masses wrought by Mahatmaji's movement, although it might continue to hold the imaginations of men as a glorious tradition, would remain obscure in the absence of a faithful and detailed record. I admit that no description could possibly portray and revive the memory of this great upheaval. Moreover, the movement is still in process, and none can tell beforehand what unnumbered events may yet not follow. Nevertheless, I have tried with the help of such insight as I had gained by an intimate contact during these seven months with Mahatmaji, to preserve, as far as I could, the memory of the eager hopes and enthusiasms that swayed the minds and hearts of the Indian masses from the Himalayas to the sea at that moment of the new awakening, and of the dominating influence weilded by the stupendous energy and the incomparable sweetness of his personal character.

I believe that the way in which Mahatmaji has been seeking, through this movement, to purify politics and raise it to the level of religion has already had the effect of initiating a movement of change of an epochal character. There have been in the past movements for Swaraj or independence in all countries, and there will be such movements also in the future, but the method by which Mahatmaji has been trying to achieve Swaraj is such that if it succeeds it will have changed the course of men's thoughts and will have, indeed, substituted for brute force, Truth, Justice and the Power of the General Will. By the application, in the sphere of politics, of the principles of Ahimsa or Non-violence and

of Satyagraha* or application of Truth-Force by the scheme of Mass Civil Disobedience, *i e* disobedience to unjust or non-moral laws, by fulfilling the programme of Charka and Khaddar of Hindu Moslem Unity and the removal of Untouchability, etc which are the several items of the constructive programme, Mahatmaji has been serving the cause not of India only, but of the whole world

The remedies that Mahatmaji has prescribed for India's political, economic and social ills, according to the diagnosis which he has made of them after deep thought and analysis and with the help of his penetrating insight, are not only fraught with good to the untold millions of this country, but their success here in India will suggest to the suffering and downtrodden masses of the world the means of their own emancipation The truth which is at the root of Mahatmaji's solutions and methods, in relation to social, political and economic problems and which he has been seeking to popularise through a wider preaching of the Spinning Wheel has by itself the potency to cope with the prevailing unrest among the masses throughout the world

The Spinning Wheel is to my mind the only antidote to the virus which selfish greed and commercial exploitation following in the wake of Machinery, have scattered throughout the world Moreover in Mahatmaji's teachings there is such an appeal for self-examination self-purification, and transformation of the inner life that it opens out the path of man's physical, intellectual and spiritual progress and brings out the essential harmony that subsists between Dharma (code of duties), Artha (wealth, or means of enjoyment), Kama (enjoyment), and Moksha (liberation from desire for

* Lit holding on to Truth

enjoyment) Therefore, this teaching is founded on eternal Truth and as such if its fundamental ideas are applied to the building up and guidance of men all over the world, there is bound to be an upward trend of the world's thoughts and sentiments, and the unrest begotten of the disturbance of equilibrium caused by commercial exploitation is bound to disappear

Disease of one kind or other manifests itself from age to age in the body corporate of society When the powerful classes, instead of devoting their power to the service of the masses, use it for purposes of self-aggrandisement, then there comes a period of great suffering for the latter and it is this suffering that initiates a revolutionary epoch From the history of Europe we see that in some epochs power was in the hands of the priests, and, in others, in those of the rulers, but in the present age, the development of science has led to an abnormal extension of man's power over the forces of matter, and simultaneously power has become concentrated in the hands of the big capitalist classes, and their scope for compassing selfish ends and the exploitation of the masses has grown to an almost inconceivable extent The result of this has been the ushering in of unrest and discontent all the world over

Under the stress of this unrest and discontent, every where in the world the old social and political institutions are giving way, and in their place, everywhere we notice the inauguration of new theories and new modes of constructive effort But all the new born methods that have so far been advanced or resorted to, to re-establish social peace and order in the West are all founded on materialistic conceptions of life. The efforts that have been put forward, instead

of attacking from within the problem of deterioration that has overtaken the internal man, under the stress of modern materialistic civilisation, seeks only to combat social ills by a mere change in the externals of social life The truth has not yet established itself securely in the Western world that it is not possible to recover in Society, moral health and peace, be it by a thousand reshufflings of its external relations, if Man's spirit continues to remain narrow and materialistic in aims and outlook The fact of the matter, however, is that the movement inagurated by Mahatmaji has, for its cornerstone this vital truth And it is because he desired to effect a radical cure of the diseases from which the body politic is suffering that at the very base of all his movements, political, economic, social, etc, we find as an ever insistent factor, the need for self-purification If Mahatmaji's efforts are crowned with success, then that ancient Law of Truth and Purity will once again in this world, re-assert itself in a renovated form

My faith is that with the success of this great work of Mahatmaji there will arise throughout the thinking world an eager desire to learn about his modes of thought and his message But in order that we may thoroughly appreciate a man's thoughts and teachings, it is necessary, in the first instance, to become intimately acquainted with the facts of his life, for it is undoubtedly true that the acts of a man's life are, as a rule, guided and regulated by his inner feelings If a man's thoughts and teachings are thoroughly sincere, then even the minor incidents of his daily life, reveal the deeper meaning and purpose of his teachings and the inner springs of his conduct For, indeed there is an invariable correspondence between his words and his actions, and on

many an occasion his actions illustrate his words That is why I have thought fit to enter into minute details of many incidents of Mahatmaji's daily life I know not whether I have succeeded in bringing into view the special features of his character and his unique personality For in proportion as, and in the manner in which, I have been able to comprehend him, in that proportion and in that manner only, have I been able to paint him And, as a result, if any errors have crept in, I crave the reader will forgive me, remembering that they have not been wilful, but owe their origin to misjudgment on my part

Sassoon Hospital,
Poona,
8th March, 1924

KRISHNADAS

SEVEN MONTHS WITH MAHATMAJI

PART I

CHAPTER I

WHEN I FIRST SAW MAHATMAJI

IT was in November 1920 that the whole of India was stirred to the depths by the news of the students' strike in the renowned Aligarh College, under the influence of the Non-co-operation movement The waves of excitement gradually spread from Aligarh to the Benares Hindu University First Mr George Joseph, the editor of the Allahabad *Independent*, then Moulana Mohammed Ali, and after him Pandit Motilal Nehru had come to Benares and addressed the students to win them over to the principles of Non-co-operation, and finally towards the end of November, Mahatma Gandhi himself, had arrived His arrival was the signal for an unprecedented wave of excitement and enthusiasm in the city, and the Hindu University itself began to tremble to its foundations I was at the time living with my revered teacher, Shriyut Satis Chandra Mukerji, formerly Principal of the Bengal National College and Editor, *Dawn Magazine*, Calcutta

Immediately after his arrival so a friend informed me, Mahatmaji had addressed an audience of students at the University on the morning of the 26th November In that speech, after describing the Punjab wrongs and the interference by the British Government with Moslem religion in the matter of the Khilafat, he had counselled the students to non-co-operate, by way of a remedy At the same time he had warned them against doing anything under the influence of passion, or any momentary impulse His advice to them

was that they must not take any decisive step without making sure that they were following the dictates of their innermost self, the voice of the spirit within This led a student to put the question "what is this inner voice? We have never had the good fortune to hear it" To this Mahatmaji made answer that this voice of the inner spirit could only be heard by those who practise self-sacrifice (*i e*) Tapas and Brahmacharya, and that they could never go wrong who had learnt to abide by the verdict of this inward monitor

Then I learnt from another friend that Mahatmaji had invited the students to a discussion at his own residence at 1 p m So I went there at this hour, and found him seated in the midst of a large circle of them

That was my first sight of Mahatmaji He was speaking so low that his voice was getting drowned by the sounds of footsteps of people moving about So I moved a bit nearer and took my seat not far behind him, when quite abruptly he exclaimed "The spirit of the Lord is come to Hindusthan Has it not?" I noticed that, in order the better to impress on the minds of his hearers any particular matter or any particular idea he would move his right finger keeping time with his words Then in reply to a question from a student he went on explaining on what basis an Ashram should be established to train our boys along right lines At this moment, the youngest son of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya came in, and whispered something in the ears of Mahatmaji Mahatmaji at once stopped the discussion, and coming out, took his seat in a car He was accompanied by Pandit Motilal Nehru I learnt that he was going to Malaviyaji for a discussion on

Non-co-operation with him My impression up to then had been that Mahatmaji had a listless and tired look, perhaps owing to some weight on his mind, but when he cordially invited Motilalji to get in, and moved a little to make room for him, I saw that a light flashed in his eyes, and his face brightened up

I saw him for a second time the same afternoon, when he addressed a mass meeting in the Benares Town Hall compound But now his face wore an altogether different look Seeing that the noise and bustle had not ceased, he stood up and moving round and round and beckoning with his hand, called upon the people to observe silence and be seated in their places I observed his smiling face his flashing eyes, and his steps, and it seemed to me that he was eager to distribute all the gladness of his heart It was such a huge gathering! In fact, I had never seen such a gathering in Benares before I stood behind, watching the doings and the behaviour of the crowd Then I saw Babu Shivaprasad Gupta rising, and raising his voice to its highest pitch, but I could not distinguish a word from where I stood far behind I wondered if I could ever hear Mahatmaji's voice from that distance, but when he began to speak, sitting in a chair, I could distinctly hear every word Yet it did not appear that he was straining his voice or making any serious effort to make himself heard When in the course of his exposition of the programme of Non violence in solemn accents he uttered the words, "If you draw the sword, you will perish with the sword". It was so thrilling that the words are still ringing in my ears

After this meeting, Mahatmaji attended a conference

There, one of the Professors asked him how it was that he called upon everybody to follow the dictates of his own conscience, when a study of history showed that wherever, war, strife and bloodshed had taken place, it had all taken place in the name of conscience Mahatmaji's answer was, so I was told, that, while it was true that there had been much wrong done in the name of conscience, it would be proved by weighing the evil done in the name of conscience against the good, that the latter far outweighed the former Mahatmaji also pointed out the need for emphasis on self-control and self sacrifice, in the lives of men, as a safeguard against the abuse of conscience, and explained that, by preaching Non-violence side by side with the need for following conscience, he was trying his best to avert war and bloodshed

The state of things among the students was somewhat perplexing There was still as before the same enthusiasm, the same excitement but they could not decide on any definite course of action If only Mahatmaji had definitely called upon them to leave their College, they would readily have done so, but instead he simply asked them to think out the problem for themselves, and decide as to their duty

The next day (27th November 1920), Mahatmaji again addressed a gathering of students in the College Hall, under the presidency of the Vice Chancellor Pandit Malaviyaji himself Having received previous intimation, I was able to attend the meeting Mahatmaji said that he revered Malaviyaji as his own elder brother he had hoped they would work hand in hand like brothers for the country's good, but most unfortunately, they had not been able to see eye to eye with each other When he had been to Aligarh to

counsel the students to non-co-operate, the sight of the mighty structures of the College, and the recollection of the glorious achievement of Sir Syed Ahmed, had almost overpowered him with grief, and the thought came to him if he was after all doing the right thing But the inner voice gave him the clear assurance that what he was doing was thoroughly right Here, too, in spite of his regard for Malaviyaji and his appreciation of the Hindu University, in obedience to the call of the spirit within and the call of duty, he was bound to tell the students that, if, in view of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs, the truth had at all dawned upon them that the present Government stood for injustice and unrighteousness it was their clear duty to have nothing to do with that Government In such a matter, it would not do to think of the future If any of them came to know that their teacher lived by robbery, should they then think of their future studies? or should they immediately leave off all connection with him? In the same way, if any of them felt in their heart of hearts that the actions of the Government were untruthful and unrighteous, he would unhesitatingly advise them to cease to have anything to do with it, and would assure them that the mere ability to renounce evil company would lay the foundation of their character and would of itself be no small education If, on the other hand they continued to co-operate with what was unjust and wicked knowing it to be such but not having the strength sternly to set their faces against it, then with all their encyclopaedic learning, they would remain as cripples for ever, and beyond working as slaves of others they would not be fit for any independent function in life Hence he told them that, if they accepted his view of the present

Government as evil, it was their religious duty to non-co-operate with it Not in a spirit of haughty defiance, however, for there is no place for haughtiness or defiance in non-violent non-co-operation, which was a movement for self-purification And if they decided to leave their college, they should reverently wait upon their parents, and, if possible, get their permission, and at the time of leaving, they should see Malaviyaji, and humbly prostrating themselves before him, ask for his blessings

After this a considerable number of students visited Mahatmaji at night, and said that fivehundred of them were prepared to leave in a body, provided that he would start a National College for them But Mahatmaji asked in reply, "Of what possible use would it be to him if somebody made a gift to him of one lakh of counterfeit rupees? He should be greatly troubled to keep them, but if he got a single genuine rupee he could hope to do much with it He went on to ask, "If they knew that there was a serpent lodged in their room would they pause for a moment to reflect where they should go or what they shoud do but would they not straightway leave the room?

Hearing Mahatmaji's reply the students were greatly troubled as to what to do Mahatmaji made it clear to them that it was no good starting a National College all at once, since they would hanker after the very same methods of study as in the Government Colleges which would not lead to any change in their life and character His aim was to help in developing strength of character, and he wanted, therefore, to test their regard for truth and justice, and their capacity for sacrifice

Professor Kripalaniji of the Hindu University had

non-co-operated on the occasion of Mahatmaji's visit to Benares Mahatmaji instructed the Professor to make a selection of those students only who under no momentary impulse of excitement, but, as their deliberate judgment wanted to non-co operate, and with them to start an Ashram to train them in the first place in methods of self-support and self-trust He asked the Professor to see that students of the Ashram learnt to stand on their feet and not depend on their guardians for financial help, and further that they were trained in the habit of doing their own work with their own hands Thus in accordance with Mahatmaji's instructions and under the leadership of Professor Kripalani, the Gandhi Ashram of Benares was established by some earnest and energetic youths of the Hindu University, and they set themselves to the task of educating themselves and building up their own character with a view to be of service to their motherland

CHAPTER II

EXPERIENCES OF A DAY

Some time after these events Mahatmaji himself officiated as high priest in Bombay at a sacrificial offering of a huge pile of foreign cloth which he set fire to with his own hands The imposing ceremonial was witnessed by more than a hundred thousand people, and the stir it created had filled the whole country About this time one day my esteemed friend, Professor Kripalani, came to my teacher, Mr Mukerji, and informed him that Mahatma Gandhi would be due at Allahabad on the 9th of the month, and he would be soon leaving for Allahabad to place before Mahatmaji the Budget of his Ashram (Benares Gandhi Ashram) At that time my health had distinctly gone down Since a long while past I had been ill, and recently I had got worse. My teacher had, therefore, decided to send me down for a change of climate to Mr Purnendu Narayan Sinha's at Patna Professor Kripalani however, suggested that instead of going to Patna I might try Allahabad and accompany him there Mr Mahadev Desai was then on the staff of the (Allahabad) *Independent* as Joint Editor, and already our relations with him were intimate Mr Kripalaniji's proposal commended itself to my teacher and he was willing that I should try Allahabad for at least a week, putting up with Mr. Desai If, however, the place did not suit me, he said, I might leave for Patna.

The next morning (10th August) accordingly in the company of Kripalaniji, I took a B N W R train to

Allahabad, and about 11 O' Clock arrived at Pandit Motilalji's place I had long been hearing of "Anand Bhavan," Panditji's famed residence With his active entry into the Non-co-operation movement it had sprung at once into prominence as a chief centre of Congress activity It is a massive pile standing in the midst of a large garden Making our way through the garden we came before the building and there found Mr Desai standing, as if expectantly awaiting our arrival As soon as he caught sight of Kripalaniji, his whole face lit up with a smile He then ran up to us, and receiving Kripalaniji with an affectionate slap on the back, escorted us both to a room at the further end of the house There, on a cot, sat Mahatma Gandhi, intent on the study of some papers which lay before him, and two young men sat in chairs on his right, assisting him in his work When Kripalaniji went and made obeisance by touching Mahatmaji's feet, he lifted his eyes and receiving him with a broad smile exclaimed—'So you have come?' I only stood at a distance reverently looking on I did not feel inclined to go near his presence and offer my salutations, as I felt it would be impudence on my part to do so. I had rarely seen such a smile as that with which Mahatmaji greeted the Professor His whole countenance expanded like a (China) rose in bloom and displayed an uncommon loveliness I noticed that whenever in the course of his talks, he burst into a smile, the same indescribable brightness lit up his eyes and face The Professor had taken with himself a Khaddar *dhoti* woven in his own Ashram for a present to Mahatmaji As soon as it was produced before Mahatmaji, he proceeded to test the yarn and then smiling said in Hindi, "I want sixty crores worth

of Khaddar Of what use would a single piece of *dhoti* be to me As long as the total required quantity is not forthcoming, how may I put on such a big piece of *dhoti** I would have to tear it and make short loin-cloths out of it before I could use it ' Then the Professor said "Given the capital is there any special difficulty in producing sixty crores worth of Khaddar"? Mahatmaji answered—"Why, already there is one crore of rupees at your disposal as capital What further capital is needed that also would be available " This conversation over, Professorji was going to introduce me to Mahatmaji But some six or seven people having then entered the room, I had time to tell the Professor that I was quite happy in having had an opportunity of seeing Mahatmaji from a distance and that he would be conferring on me a favour if he complied with my request not to take me to Mahatmaji I felt that I had no business to waste his precious time Finding that I was so very unwilling the Professor refrained from taking me to Mahatmaji Subsequent to this, after bath and meal, once or twice did I enter Mahatmaji's room, and I noticed that he was deeply intent on his work

Pandit Motilalji all smiles, was moving about welcoming every guest After some time spent in talks in Mahatmaji's room, he said he would be attending Maulana Mahomad Ali's *durbar*, and with this he left and repaired to a Hall in the central part of the building It was for the first time then that I heard that Maulana Mahomad Ali was there I had for long been familiar with his name, and naturally I felt the eagerness to go and have a look at him. So, I followed Panditji into that hall, and there found

*A long piece of cloth worn round the waist by male Indians

Maulana Saheb seated in the midst of a group of persons, mostly Mussalmans They were putting him all sorts of questions, and he was replying in broken accents It appeared to me that his voice was naturally so broken It was as if the sounds proceeded from his very stomach, and one got the impression that each single word of his was being projected as it were from within His conversation, his general demeanour, in fact everything about him, showed that he was a man endued with high spirit and courage

After answering for a while the queries put to him by people about him, the Maulana Saheb rose and left Then I set out in search of Professor Kripalani, and after much wandering about discovered him engaged in conversation with a gentleman whom I did not know He was showing him the report and other papers connected with his Ashram From the very way in which they were talking with each other, I could however easily make out that he was no other than Pandit Jawharlal Nehru, the renowned son of Pandit Motilal Nehru It was for the first time now that I saw Pandit Jawharlal, the very image of the spirit of sacrifice and straightforwardness Of his virtues I had heard from many lips. I stood quietly behind, hearing them talk, but without disturbing them Jawharlalji was talking in a low voice, but his words were rapid With a little attention I could discover that while the sounds were so low he would now and then speak out with a sudden jerk and emphasis on particular words His countenance, his words and his manners all showed that there was not any mental reservation behind his speech, that, in fact, his exterior was, so to say, a true concrete representation of his interior nature I noticed also that the presence of Mahatmaji had

brought there a large body of other leading men of Allahabad, whose names so often figured in the papers. Besides, under the shade of the trees outside, sat many who had come from the villages around

Wandering about and merely observing things I got tired, so, I rested for a while in a chair on the verandah where many others also were seated Just at this time a motor car drew up at the gate I then learnt that Mahatmaji was going to a meeting of ladies, from where he was to proceed to a mass meeting on the grounds of the Swaraj Sabha The moment we heard that Mahatmaji would be coming, presently we all rose to our feet Soon he came, rather suddenly holding Jawharlalji by the hand His steps were rapid With eyes turned towards none, he moved fast and stood at the gate Already, however, having seen the car arrive, the people from the villages, who had all been resting under the trees had all hurried to the gate and crowded about the car to get a *Darshan* (auspicious sight) of Mahatmaji Finding that it was not possible to force a passage through the crowd and reach the car, Mahatmaji checked his speed, and came to a rather sudden halt Jawharlalji now made an appeal to the people to divide and stand in two rows, so as to make a passage for Mahatmaji They obeyed his instruction, and stepped aside forming two lines, and a path was made for Mahatmaji to walk and reach the car Still Mahatmaji did not move It was as if he was looking out for an opportunity how effectively to make a dash through the small crowd Pandit Jawharlalji on his part was repeatedly enjoining the crowd that no one should leave his place and attempt to make a move towards Mahatmaji But this appeal

fell on deaf years At the sight of Mahatmaji these people, it appeared, had become quite beside themselves With eyes rivetted on his countenance, they gave themselves up to joyous cries Their eyes betrayed as if they had transported themselves into some dreamland Their regard for Jawharlalji was deep, that is why they obeyed him and remained standing in two opposite rows But when he warned them not to leave their places, it seemed as if the warning did not reach their ears at all Mahatmaji was seeking for an opportunity of making a dash through them Precisely in the same way the crowd stood, lying in wait as it were for an opportunity to touch his person This was much like what we see among children running and playing, when one among them suddenly stops to seize the opportunity of touching the body of his rival. The shouts of "jai" (victory) to Mahatma Gandhi had for a moment diverted my attention to them, but that very moment Mahatmaji had made his way to the car and had got himself seated At this, the people seemed to have lost all self possession Crowding round the car on every side they began to press and jostle about, and it seemed as if they would smash the car In this confusion, with no other alternative before them, the car was driven forward The scene is indescribable, there was the continual shouting and crying of "victory to Mahatma Gandhi," while on the top of it was this mad struggle to get near It would be no wonder, I thought, if some one in the crowd got smothered under the pressure Even after the car had begun moving no small number of people clung desperately to the two sides and kept on hanging But the speed increasing, they all got down one by one quickly enough The whole of the

crowd then began running after the car, shouting 'victory' all the while Such a sight was altogether a novel experience in my life As an ocular demonstration of the peoples' deep love for Mahatmaji, this little incident indeed was most striking But it also showed to me for the first time to what tyrannical excesses love may go Mahatmaji having departed, the house relapsed into dull stillness So many people had been coming and going but now one by one all had left, no one knew for where

Professor Kripalani now came and told me that it was absolutely necessary for us to be at the public meeting before Mahatmaji arrived, for otherwise it would not be possible to get admittance I had no previous experience of the sort of commotion amidst which I had been moving that day, my life had till then been lived in seclusion I was therefore quite agreeable to follow the lead of the Professor wherever he should direct my steps His plan was that we should reach the office of the *Independent* * first, and then come to the public meeting in the company of Mr Mahadev Desai Then a certain heavy, plumpy, jovial gentleman offered to get us to the *Independent* office His son would be presently coming in a car, and he would ask him to reach us there This gentleman was Mr Shyamlal Nehru as I learnt afterwards from Professorji. He was then conducting the *Democrat* newspaper He was full of fun and humour, with an ever beaming countenance I had seen him during midday entertaining Mahatmaji in his room for a pretty long time with all sorts of stories In answer to the query whether Kripalaniji would be able to

* A daily newspaper then issued from Allahabad devoted to the cause of Non-co-operation

identify his son, the Professor pointing to Mr Nehru's huge, bulky frame said that just as it was impossible to mistake the father, so also it would be impossible to mistake the son He would be able to identify the son from his likeness to the father. On this Mr Nehru burst into a roar of laughter, and left

Arriving at the *Independent* office shortly after, we found Mr George Joseph, the Editor, and Mr Mahadev Desai both very busy with their work Mr Joseph having written an article criticising Mr Chintamani,* Mr Desai was engaged in looking over the proofs The latter while at work made a casual remark that Mr Joseph was bound to get imprisoned directly that article came out From the talk they were having with each other, I received the impression that it was their belief that Mr Chintamani was a man who could hardly brook public criticism of himself The reading of the proofs over, Mr Desai read out to us two articles from Maulana Mohamed Ali's pen, written at Mr Desai's instance, under the title of "Undelivered letters" one of which was addressed to Mr Sherwani and the other to Mr Ranga Iyer Having heard the letters so humourously written, it was impossible for us to cease laughing for a while Thus the hour for the meeting having drawn near, from the *Independent* office we made straight for the Swaraj Sabha maidan (grounds) where the meeting was to be held.

The sight that met my eyes was that the maidan was no longer a maidan, but a veritable sea of heads All were waiting in expectation of Mahatmaji The way to the

* Then filling the office of a "Minister" in the Provincial Government (U P)

platform, for the leaders, was from behind, where volunteers kept strict guard Mr Desai took me with him by that way to the vicinity of the platform and himself took his seat on one of the steps leading up to it and asked me to do so I noticed that at one corner of the meeting place there was a huge collection of foreign clothing got ready for Mahatmaji to set fire to Pandit Motilalji's contribution to that pile deserved special mention His foreign neckties suspended by a rope in the shape of a garland in his own house had already attracted my attention In addition he had sent for the bonfire some other foreign clothes including fine garments of foreign make Even from that distance I could descry among the articles piled up some highly expensive apparel The crowd was so vast, and yet there was little disorder All were waiting patiently A short while after, Mahatmaji arrived followed by Maulana Mahomed Ali, Pandit Motilal Nehru, Jawharlal Nehru, and others Mahatmaji's eyes were not turned away anywhere; he rapidly mounted up the steps and took his seat on the dais Pandit Motilalji commenced the proceedings by offering a warm welcome to Mahatmaji, Maulana Mahomed Ali and the other assembled leaders, and the speeches followed Mahatmaji first addressed the audience, and was followed by Maulana Mahomed Ali As soon as he got up, a man from a distant corner rose and shouted at the top of his voice that the Turkey cap on the Maulana's head was of foreign manufacture, and with this he began abusing him This insult to the Maulana agitated the local leaders not a little, but the former with a wave of the hand calmed the audience and taking the cap in his own hand exclaimed to the audience that though in shape it resembled a Turkey cap, yet as a

matter of fact it was made of Khaddar.* The gentleman referred to was thus silenced, and he quietly resumed his seat. But the incident gave to Maulana Saheb's speech almost the character of a reply to many false accusations levelled against him by his political opponents, and especially by the *Leader* newspaper of Allahabad. Maulana Saheb was followed by Mr Stokes. What was my surprise when I heard him give his speech in such good Hindi, and with so much ease! After Mr Stokes, Mahatmaji made a second short speech setting forth his arguments in support of the destruction of foreign cloth, and calling upon the people to keep to their seats and not crowd about the pile of foreign cloth when he would go to light it. But the moment he rose from his seat, the whole audience stood up also. He then hurriedly left to set fire to the clothes, and having done so quitted the place.

When the meeting was over, all order among the crowd was at an end. Neither of us knew our way, and it was already dark. How to get back home was therefore a problem. As we were wandering about, puzzled what way to take, we met a friend of Mr Mahadev Desai's, who arranged for our return home.

Returning to "Anand Bhavan" we saw two carriages laden with the luggage belonging to Mahatmaji and his party ready to leave for the station. Seeing that Mahatmaji was preparing to start, Kripalaniji told me that he also must accompany him to Patna, for so far nothing had been done about the business which had brought him there. The news that Kripalaniji was about to take leave of me made me sad. I told Professor Kripalaniji that after he had left,

* Indian hand-spun and hand-woven material

I also must return to Benares He was a little concerned to hear this For it was his belief that a few days spent outside Benares by way of a change would set me up He therefore proposed to me that it would be better to carry out my original programme of coming to Patna instead of returning to Benares But the day s confusion and exitement had so much told upon my nerves that my inclination at the time was to go back to Benares And I remembered also what my teacher had told me when I left Benares He had warned me against following Mahatmaji in his tour, seeing that my body should hardly be able to bear the strain of such journey But Kriplananiji kept on pressing me to come along with him to Patna However, about half past eight in the evening, I arrived at the station and got a seat in a compartment at some considerable distance from Mahatmaji Kripalaniji after having taken all possible care to make me comfortable joined Mahatmaji in his compartment Getting into the train my first thought was that on my arrival at Patna, I must write to my teacher explaining the whole situation, and when he had heard all about it, I felt sure, he would not take me to task If I had to return to Benares, I must get down at Mogul Serai about one in the morning But having made up my mind to go to Patna and knowing that the train would reach there at day-break, I went to sleep quite unconcernedly

CHAPTER III

PREPARATORY TO INTRODUCTION

At the Buxor Station about three in the morning, the Professor came and woke me up I then perceived that Mahatmaji and his party had already got down there They would tour round the villages by motor holding meetings at five different places, and then reach Sasaram about five in the evening Such was the programme that had been fixed up As there was not much room left in the cars, Professor Kripalani had remained behind But he would get down at the Arrah Station, and from there by the Light Railway he would go to the village Vikramajit, where Mahatmaji and party were expected to arrive by 12 noon Thereafter Professorji would avail himself of the 1-30 p m train and rejoin Mahatmaji at Sasaram Two volunteers deputed to look after his comforts were accompanying him

When it was about dawn we reached the Arrah Station Professor Kripalani had been going to Sasaram singly it was his inmost wish that I should remain with him till we reached Patna together It was more for this reason that he was making this long detour by way of Arrah otherwise he might have even at some inconvenience to himself gone by motor along with Mahatmaji s party In this situation could I leave him? I felt therefore constrained to get down at Arrah. The narrow gauge line train left about an hour and a half after, and we reached the village Vikramajit by that train about ten in the morning From the train itself, when we were some eight to ten miles off, we could descry

people from whole villages wending their way, in a long succession of rows, to the place of meeting From the station to that place was a distance of about a mile and a half In the very centre of an extensive plain were fixed tents for guests to rest, and for the assembly itself a shamiana (huge awning) had been put The report reached my ears that the terrible Bakri id (Cow) riots that had taken place the year previous in the district of Shahabad (Behar) started from this place Mahatmaji was, therefore, this year specially invited here to see that no fresh breach of peaceful relations between Hindus and Mussalmans might occur The two volunteers that were accompanying us had given us to understand that the arrangement was that Mahatmaji's party should have their morning repast here about twelve noon But we noticed no efforts to give effect to the arrangement Indeed, we felt that there was a serious lack of effort in the matter of all arrangements Our two volunteers were getting ready to prepare food for us, but we asked them not to trouble about it Fearing that as strangers to the place we might attract a crowd about us, we repaired to some distance and sat under the shade of a big tree An open place all about us, this life of ours under tree-shade appealed to me intensely But while we were enjoying our new life, the hours were slipping by. Mahatmaji was to have arrived at 12, that hour had passed, and following it, the hours 1, 2 and 3, had also struck, and yet he had not put in an appearance The people were getting too impatient, and so they spent the hours witnessing horse-races at one place, or hearing speakers holding forth at another We too had got tired, what with having had to wait for hours together, what with a whole day's fast.

The train for Sasaram had already left at 1-30 p m , and no other train was available in either direction that day. Those among the people who had come to attend the meeting from long distances either on foot or on horse-back began to retrace their steps and the crowd that had gathered at the place of meeting was thinning in numbers After a long time had thus passed, all on a sudden we beheld people who had gone back a long way across the level plain turn their paces and come running along towards the place of the meeting This was the signal for the people here to give themselves up to a round of cheering Simultaneously, we could just descry very far off two cars advancing towards us with all speed amidst clouds of dust Only a little while after, Mahatmaji with the whole of his party arrived and straightway made for the place of meeting and commenced proceedings With Mahatmaji our good friend Babu Ram Binode had come and met us under the tree Professor Kripalani for a brief while indulged in a lover s quarrel with him over the discomforts we had been put to Our discussion then turned upon how we were to get to Sasaram. Their thought turned to me specially, for I was in weak health, and had no food the whole of the day They decided that they would get me occupy a seat in one of the cars then and there, after which they would shift themselves as best as they could If this arrangement excluded anybody, it would be of no consequence This decision having been taken, and before the meeting broke up, I went and with their help got a seat in Mahatmaji's car, by the side of Mahatmaji's nephew, Mr Jamnadas Gandhi.

Maulana Mahomed Ali was then on his legs, but it was not for these country people to give a patient hearing to

any speaker The result was confusion all round, and the place itself was too hot by reason of the overcrowding So many were there hanging about the two cars on every side They would hardly heed any remonstrance, on the contrary the crowd pressed closer and closer Babu Ram Binode and Professor Kripalani were hard put to it to protect us from the surging crowd The nearer the time for the dispersal of the meeting the greater became the crowd that surrounded us And thus thousands that had been to the meeting began converging towards the car, suspecting that it was the car which Mahatmaji was going to occupy

Finding that the whole audience were making for this point, Mahatmaji got down from the platform on the rear, but he had advanced only a few paces when a large throng besieged him, all anxious to offer him salutations or to touch his person I could hardly describe the confusion and tumult that ensued as thousands of people were making one simultaneous move towards him The few volunteers that had been escorting him got thoroughly exhausted with repeated efforts to keep back the advancing multitude Then making a circle round Mahatmaji they took their stand under a mango tree But still wave after wave of seething mass made towards him, and it was hardly possible for the handful of volunteers to stem the tide The cries of the volunteers and the uproar caused by the crowd drew our attention in the direction of Mahatmaji At that critical moment, finding no other alternative Ram Binode Babu ordered the driver to advance through the crowd unmindful of anything that might happen and make straight for where Mahatmaji was standing The repeated hooting of the horn startled

these rustic people, and withdrawing from their positions little by little they made way for the car to pass As soon as Ram Binode Babu and I having succeeded in forcing our way through the crowd reached the spot under the mango tree, we stretched out our hands towards Mahatmaji, who by holding them fast was able to jump into the car and take his seat That instant turning the course of the car round, we drove forward with all speed in the direction of Sasaram For a long, long distance, the people came running after us as in one continuous stream I noticed that Mahatmaji had been hurt in some two or three places in his feet and blood flowed out I suspected that there must have been people in the crowd who had attempted to touch his person with their long sticks causing those hurts Even when seated in the car, his eyes were not diverted anywhere Once or twice I had turned my eyes towards him when I saw him deeply ingrossed in his own thoughts On the way, suddenly one of the lights in our car came down, and the car had to be brought to a stand Then looking behind I saw a vast crowd running towards us In the neighbouring fields peasants had been at work, but they left their work and came running to us They bent their heads in salutation, and with the words – "Blessed are we! Blessed are we!" on their lips, they went on expressing their self-gratulations

When about to enter a village we invariably found the villagers standing athwart our path and so preventing further progress Though we would repeatedly wave our hands asking them to stand aside still they would not budge an inch to let the motor pass through Necessarily therefore the speed of the car had to be slowed down, when to the

accompaniment of conch-shells and amidst joyous shouts of victory to Mahatma Gandhi would be showered upon our persons from all sides, flowers, small chips of cocoanut (Fruit) together with fragrant substances and other articles of worship Having in this manner passed through a number of villages we came upon a place where the road traversed an open plain, and here the car was driven forward at a very high speed Suddenly, however, after we had advanced but a short distance one of the tyres burst, and all of us came out of the car as the tyre had got to be renewed Then it was drizzling, and I was standing close by Mahatmaji on his left Just then an old lady holding an umbrella over her head, and supporting herself on a staff, approached towards me with slow steps and asked me the question,—"My son, who here is Mahatma Gandhi?" Standing as I did so near Mahatmaji, I constrained from saying that the person by my side was none other than Mahatma Gandhi, because I was feeling shy So I made no reply, but remained mute As she repeated her question, Mahatmaji himself put in the query—"Why should you be seeking him?" At this the old lady stepping forward said —"Sire, I am now one hundred and four and my sight has grown dim I have visited the various holy places I have been to Badrikashram* In my own home I have dedicated two temples and made provision for the worship and maintenance of the Deity Just as we have had Ram and Krishna as Avatars, so also Mahatma Gandhi has appeared as an Avatar, I hear Until I have seen him death will not come to me" When she was speaking, tears suffused her eyes. She had herself become now aware, without my

* The holiest place of pilgrimage in the Himalayas (N India.)

telling her, that the person she was speaking to was none other than Mahatma Gandhi himself So the next question that she put was—"Sire, how could this desire or thirst (for things) be allayed?" Mahatmaji nodding, smiled a little and said, "This desire, yes, it is impossible to get rid of our bondage so long as there is this desire, this thirst for enjoyment" Then hearing that she was so very old, Mahatmaji wanted to know what kind of food she took, etc She began by saying that she had become a widow at twelve and since then she had been following a very austere mode of life She described it all At the time in question, she said that she had been subsisting on very little, for her practice was to take only one syrup made out of Durba-grass during the day Finding that the old lady was thus freely talking with Mahatmaji the eight or nine rustics who had in the interval gathered together informed us that she had been standing there at the very spot the whole of the day since early morning with the umbrella over her head, with no other object than that of having a Dharshan * of Mahatma Gandhi She was now too old to be able to walk about At that time we had been speeding along with the speed of an arrow and so if per chance the tyre had not burst at that very spot, she could hardly have noticed anything. Or, if the tyre had burst at some little distance from the spot, it would not have been possible for her to walk that distance, and have a look at Mahatmaji The tyre had burst only at a distance of four or five yards from where she had been standing This coincidence of circumstances seemed, indeed, strange Then the other car came up but the repairs had not yet been completed Seeing that

* i.e. Auspicious look

Mahatmaji was standing outside and getting wet in the drizzle, Babu Rajendra Prasad came out of the second car and took his stand near Mahatmaji and finding me a new comer inquired about me with the query—"Brother, who are you?" In the meantime as the renewal of the tyre was getting delayed, Maulana Mahomed Ali Saheb called out and invited Mahatmaji to come and take his seat in the second car Mahatmaji went and sat there But the road being too narrow at the spot, there was no room for the second car to pass along by our side, and so they also had to wait till our car was in working order

When our car became fit for further journey, Professor Kripalani and two or three Mussalman gentlemen from the other car behind us came and got into it Mahatmaji chose to remain in the company of Maulana Mahomed Ali Of the two cars, ours was the bigger and faster Necessarily we left the other one far, far behind As before, so now also during our progress, as soon as we reached the outskirts of any village, offerings of fruits and flowers although meant for Mahatmaji were thrown into our car and we had to receive them People believed that Mahatmaji must be occupying our car the first to arrive, and therefore they were all concentrating on it Professor Kripalani, Babu Ram Binode, and our other companions went on remarking that it was well that it should be so For in that way could all the persecution by these people be diverted on to our devoted heads and so spend itself out, and Mahatmaji would be given the opportunity to enjoy some little respite in this the last part of his motor journey

And so when nearing Sasaram, we saw that the whole of the town had come out, and were standing in a double

line, some two or three miles long It was about sun-down The crimson rays of the sun over-spreading the four quarters of the heaven lent but an air of uncommon loveliness to the whole scene At our very approach so many people began to dance in sheer joy Then threading our way through this double row of people, with our ears invaded by continuous shouts of victory to Mahatma Gandhi, we slowly advanced towards the city, and as we advanced, the crowd grew larger and larger At length we reached near a Railway line It was then time for a train to pass, and the road across had been closed for the time being Our car had to stop, but that very instant, the whole crowd from every side closed upon us The pressure was so great that although we were inside the car, we felt we were almost out of breath As we were some seven or eight in the car, these people were hard put to it to discover which of us must be Mahatma Gandhi, and in their perplexity some would be fighting to clutch at the feet of Kripalani, some to clutch at the feet of Ram Binode —while others again would feel themselves best to have merely touched my person And so group after group came as in a regular stream nor did they leave us until in the manner aforesaid they had had a look of us and a touch of our body This simple faith of the people touched, indeed, the deepest chords of one s heart But we had been fasting the whole day, and had been suffering also from the fatigue of the journey to us this manifestation of love partook of the nature of love's tyranny and seemed to be past endurance Our suffering indeed was very great, but we reconciled ourselves to our fate with the thought that we were taking upon our own heads the trouble which

it would have been Mahatmaji's lot to bear if he had been with us in the car That he had been thus saved was to us some consolation in our misery

The train having passed, the road was opened and we lost time in re-starting our car, and soon we were at our quarters after having threaded our way through the narrow lanes and byelanes of Sasaram There too a large crowd had gathered but a strict guard had been kept at the gate A short while after, the second car arrived, bringing Mahatmaji, Maulana Mahomed Ali, Babu Rajendra Prasad and others

CHAPTER IV

MEETING AND ACQUAINTANCE

Immediately after Mahatmaji's arrival, goat's milk, the usual food for Mahatmaji was requisitioned We were told that it had been sent for, but had not arrived Jamnadas was quite upset at finding that it was not yet ready Shortly after the milk came, and after much hurrying to and fro it was warmed and got ready, and brought before Mahatmaji. But he would not take it Jamnadas looked pale in sorrow at this turn of events I learnt that Mahatamaji had not had a morsel of food the whole day, but had expressed a wish that he would have his meal at Sasaram But the sun had gone down before the goat s milk could be got ready, and it was his practice, it was reported to me, not to take anything after sunset

As soon as he had arrived, the local leaders came and entered into conversation with him But Mahatmaji was then thoroughly exhausted after the days's journey, while on the top of it all had been the day s fast And there remained for him yet to address a public meeting at Sasaram. So just to give a little respite, it was arranged to put off the meeting for two hours The other gentlemen also took their leave But outside, the noise was horrible The room occupied by him had three or four doors facing the road, and they had all to be closed But such a crowd had assembled there and been making such noise that one suspected that the doors might be broken open any moment. I was standing at a corner of the room, Mahatmaji noticed

me, and by a motion of his his fingers called my attention to a lamp at a distance I thought he was asking me to turn down the wick a bit to enjoy greater repose But the fact was otherwise, he wanted the light for his use As soon as I grasped his meaning I took the lamp and placed it before him That instant he took out his paper from his portfolio and fell to work

It was for the first time now that he gave me something to do by way of direction Before this when the tyre had burst and he was talking to the old lady, his attention had been in the first instance drawn to me as a new comer who had been travelling in his company I thought that as he had seen me before as one of the company, he was prompted to give me the direction Otherwise, as I could see from my experience during these two days, it was not his practice to ask a stranger or a new-comer to do his bidding Seeing him intent on work, I left the room for the verandah outside Returning shortly after I found him gently discussing something with Mr Kripalani The moment Kripalaniji saw me, he broke out—"Is there any dearth of men? Here's Krishnadas, for instance, who, if you could but persuade him, could very well manage your work" Mahatmaji replied, "How shall I take away from you your man and let your work suffer?" Kripalaniji answered—"He is not one of my men" Then Mahatmaji began by questioning Kripalaniji about me After a brief exchange of words with the Professor and without questioning me at all, Mahatmaji came to the decision to send me out to Ahmedabad as Assistant Editor to *Young India* He then informed Kripalaniji that to relieve me of all worry and put me also on the way to learn the work, he would send down Mr.

Mahadeo Desai from Allahabad to Ahmedabad instructing him to be there for two to three months Kripalaniji said, "If Krishnadas goes, there would be no further need of sending Mahadeo " Mahatmaji had already risen from his seat to go and have a wash But when he heard Kripalaniji speak those words, his face beamed with pleasure, and he broke out with the remark, " Indeed !" Then with a motion of his fingers, pointing at me, he exclaimed, "Then certainly, you will have to join me !"

I was simply astounded at this happening My teacher had definitely warned me against joining Mahatmaji in his tours lest I should be caught in a whirl of work For I was then in a such a weak state of health that it was out of the question for me to undertake any responsible work But look at what has happened ! It was out of my regard for Professorji that I had agreed to come here to Sasaram while bound for Patna Ere this I had been offered the opportunity to get introduced to Mahatmaji, but I had willingly declined it But now he himself had come forward to talk to me, and he not merely talked to me, but he would have me undertake a responsibility for him and leave for Ahmedabad for the purpose Feeling the oppressive strain of such thoughts I came out of Mahatmaji's room as soon as he had left for the wash, and threw myself in an arm chair on the verandah, and gave myself up to endless speculation Coming across Professorji I remonstrated with him for his having thrown me into such an embarrassing situation I tried also to bring home to him how utterly impracticable his proposal was, but he gave no heed to my words On the contrary he tried to bring me round by saying that it was absolutely necessary that I should go,

that if I could by ever so little bring down the burden of Mahatmaji's worries, it would be no small service done to the country Finding that it was useless to go on arguing with Professorji, I proposed to him that I should myself go and frankly state before Mahatmaji all my difficulties, and that I may be enabled to do so I made the request that Professorji should help me by arranging for an interview

Soon after, I was sent for Entering Mahatmaji's room I found that every body else was sent away, and that Mahatmaji himself was waiting, so it appeared to me, in an attitude of eager expectancy to hear what I might have to say I lost no time in telling him that I was already engaged in rendering service to my teacher at Benares, that he had grown old, and that it was not for me to leave him and go elsewhere Here Professorji interposing made light of my objection He said that he himself would take the burden of the work on his shoulders After this, of course, I could not press my point with the same force Mahatmaji now suggested that he himself was ready and willing to write to my teacher, Mr Mukerji, and get his views After all these proposals, I thought I must clear my position further by raising some other points I pointed out that Professorji cherished an affectionate liking for me and therefore was led to form an exaggerated view of my powers In truth, my capacities were far less than what he had imagined Further, having never associated nor worked with Mahatmaji, I was hardly in a position to understand his point of view. Therefore, for me to go to Ahmedabad to take up a new responsibility neither attracted me, nor was it a source of encouragement for me At this Mahatmaji said that I need not worry over all that, Mahadeo would come

and set me on the way And he went on to speak at length in high praise of Mr Mahadeo Desai He then proceeded to explain that the movement of the spirit which he wanted to inaugurate in the country was undoubtedly based on old Indian ideals, nevertheless it was his intention to give it a new orientation Therefore, to understand his point of view required a little penetrative insight, and his words must have to be scanned accordingly And so he went on explaining many things about his message Every single objection of mine was thus rendered of no effect He on whom was rivetted the gaze of India and before the power of whose resplendent spirituality cowered the spirit of the mighty British Government, was it for me to carry on a war of words with such a personality? I was feeling ashamed even to think of opposing his wishes any further, and so I said nothing farther By this time Maulana Mahamed Ali came to urge Mahatmaji to start for the meeting Mahatmaji was instantly on his legs While leaving he left word with Professor Kripalani that I should also attend the meeting

It was then ten at night We had not even then had our meal Further the whole of the day I had been starving, and then there was the great strain to which I was subjected on account of the crowd at so many different places The result was that I was thoroughly knocked up But I had no choice left to me when I learnt he had left instructions that I must attend the meeting So in the company of Kripalaniji and Babu Binode I came to the place of the meeting The entrance by which one passed to the platform had then been closed The crowd hanging about the gate was too great We succeeded in making our way through the crowd and the gate was instantly

opened for us, but considerable numbers entered in our wake, which led to much pushing and jostling about Professorji and Ram Binode Babu instantly got upon the platform, but for myself, partly out of shyness, and partly because of pressure about me I was delaying Meanwhile the volunteers having failed to cope with the crowd, a free fight began, and a few blows also fell on my back Noticing this Maulana Mahomed Ali called out to me with the words, "Don't be so slow, man," and reaching out his hand pulled me up on to the platform

It was a huge gathering, no less than twenty thousand people must have assembled in front of us On the platform besides Mahatmaji and Maulana Mahomed Ali, I noticed a few provincial leaders of Behar Babu Rejendra Prasad spoke first according welcome and was followed by Mahatmaji Next Maulana Mahomed Ali spoke It was then past eleven It was not possible for me to hear any of these speeches with anything like attention There was gnawing hunger at the stomach, there was the heaviness of sleep in the eyes, while the body itself was ready to droop through exhaustion At this point Kripalaniji and Ram Binode Babu expressed by a gesture their desire to leave the meeting I assented, and then we three quietly got down from the platform and returned to our quarters

We had our meal after which I went to bed After a short spell of sleep I awoke and saw Mahatmaji just returning from the meeting He took his seat on a cot just near me and as soon as the bed was made ready for him, he lay down on it He was so exhausted at intervals I heard him sighing heavily and reciting the words, "Shree Ram, Shree Ram"

I rose at an early hour before dawn, and finishing ablution got myself ready Mahatmaji also rose, and when he had finished washing hands and mouth breakfast was placed before him His meal over, he handed up to me the saucer, the milk-cup and the spoon to scour and clean There was as many people about longing to serve him even in that humble way I was a new comer whose acquaintance with him was but one day old But even so, he had looked upon me as one so closely related that he had unhesitatingly asked me to clean his utensils I felt extremely happy When I had done the cleansing he called me again, and handing to me a paper and pencil asked me to write out in English a report of his previous night's speech I had listened to that speech half asleep Moreover, since early in the morning a howling crowd was waiting outside Neither was my brain cool In the circumstances, I did not know whether I could at all reproduce the speech I felt also that I must lose no time to go back to Benares and to report to Mr Mukerji, my teacher, previous evening's proposals A train for Benares was to leave at 8-30 A M So I saw Mahatmaji again and expressed my wish to leave by that train I told him that I proposed to write out the speech while travelling, and, if my teacher agreed to come back and meet him at Patna three days later

He readily gave his consent to my proposals, but he asked me to put to my teacher three questions on his be half Firstly, whether he thought I had the requisite qualification for the work in question, secondly, whether he would accord me his permission, and thirdly, if he gave me his permission, whether I should have blessings also Then Mahatmaji asked if it was well that he should

send through me a letter to my teacher I said it was not necessary Then snatching a hasty breakfast, and before starting for the station, I again went into his presence to take my leave I saw him very busy at that time over many things, and discussing matters, but he gave me a gracious look and bade me good bye Before parting he repeated his request that I must not forget to write out a report of his Sasaram speech Though it was only a single day's acquaintance yet he treated me so cordially that I took courage for the first time now to touch his feet by way of obeisance

CHAPTER V

A DAY AT PATNA

I took the 8-30 train from Sasaram and reached Benares the same day about 1 P M In the train I wrote out a report of Mahatmaji's Sasaram address My teacher was surprised to see me back at Benares so unexpectedly For I had written to him from Allahabad that I would stay there for a whole week, and he was quite in the dark as to all that had happened on my account meanwhile The moment he saw me he expressed his surprise that in the course of those three days I should be looking so improved Then after recounting to him the extreme hardships and the surprising experiences of the previous day, I placed before him Mahatmaji's proposal I was a little surprised to find that he so readily agreed to it

Before, his apprehension had been that my health might break down if I accompanied Mahatmaji in his tour but when he found that notwithstanding the strain of the last two days, I was looking all the better that apprehension was removed

Looking at all sides of the question, my teacher came to the conclusion that as between going to Ahmedabad to undertake the responsibility of *Young India*, and staying with Mahatmaji, if possible, with a view to have opportunities of serving him personally, the latter was the better course, being more conducive to my welfare My teacher impressed upon me that the impurities of a man's character were removed by nothing so easily as by devoted personal service

to a purified soul He explained that it was a matter of general experience that whenever a person came under the influence of any particular type of association, that association would leave an impress upon his character That is why we find the high virtues of association with pure souls recounted in our scriptures Mahatmaji in his view was the very image of purity, for in his opinion Mahatmaji not merely preached *Ahimsa* (non-violence) by word of mouth, but he had made it also a part of his own life Again, said he, the wider acceptance by the world at large of *Ahimsa* as an active principle of life would have undoubtedly the effect of allaying the general unrest But not merely that, for the individual who would advance on the path of spirituality, the first step would be to learn the lesson of Ahimsa If forgetting my petty self, I could devote myself to the service of such a great soul as Mahatmaji my life would soon grow in purity Thus he repeatedly sought to impress upon me

He next explained to me that, spiritually speaking we see reflected in the world outside only a picture of the inner condition of our lives If our hearts are shrouded in the darkness of untruth, then in the world outside the light of truth hardly shines for us If inside ourselves there is violence, malice and pride of self rampant, we would see nothing but the play of violence, malice and pride in the world outside Therefore, in order to see the world in a pure and truthful perspective, the attainment of purity of heart by means of self-purification, becomes essential Wanting in such purity of heart each one of us walks about as a very centre of disharmony, and in the place of harmony scatters about the flames of hate and strife If such weakness of

character have got to be eradicated, if, in fact, the Satan within us must be exorcised, association with and devoted service to a great soul is a far easier means of achieving success than fighting sigle-handed with one's own evil nature

Thus with his permission and his benedictions, I left Benares on the 15th August and reached Patna early next morning Mahatmaji's three questions my teacher answered in a letter to Professor Kripalani In that letter my teacher said that he did not think that I should be found wanting for the particular kind of work that Mahatmaji wished me to undertake Further, he said that he would cheerfully send me out on any errand of duty prescribed by Mahatmaji Nevertheless, he desired to express the opinion that if I must fulfil the real need of my life, I must seek to develop the non-violent side of my character Hence if instead of sending me to Ahmedabad, Mahatmaji should be pleased to keep me closely associated with him as a personal attendant then alone should, he thought, my highest interests be subserved

I got down at the Patna station and enquired of a porter where Mahatmaji was putting up Carrying my luggage on his head he took me to the National School premises, a few minute's walk from the station I met Ram Benode Babu there, and learnt from him that Mahatmaji was then staying at the Sadakat Ashram, a distance of four miles from the town Shortly after, a messenger from the Ashram came and in a state of hurry looked about for me, and finding me he made haste to inform me that the Working Committee was going to sit at eight in the morning, and it was Mahatmaji's wish that, if possible, I could come and see him before the meeting Forthwith a carriage was sent for and

he left with me But it was then close upon eight, and so there was not the least likelihood of our reaching the place before the hour fixed for the meeting

I reached the Sadakat Ashram when it was very nearly nine On the outskirts of the town, on a bank of the Ganges and in the midst of a garden, the Ashram stood It was then the very height of the rainy season and the river was in full flood overflowing the bank on either side Inside the Ashram itself I noticed ample equipment for work Buildings were in course of construction, there were spinning wheels in working order, and handloom factories and so on, On a verandah on the backside of a cottage, Mahatmaji was sitting, and a meeting of the Working Committee was in progress Inside the cottage none but intimates were admitted Immediately on my arrival, Professor Kripalani cordially welcomed me and took me inside Mahatmaji being there, there was a constant throng of people about the place in spite of the rains and wet weather, groups of country-women following each other in succession would be seen making a circuit from behind the cottage, and then, they would stand at some distance from the verandah, have a view of Mahatmaji, and then having offered him salutation would retire

As soon as I had taken my seat, Kripalaniji wanted to know what was the decision I had arrived at By way of answer, I read out my teacher's letter When I had finished reading he told me that Mahatmaji himself had come to the decision that he would take me along with him, instead of sending me out to Ahmedabad Thus he said my teacher's request had already been granted. The news took me by surprise,

It was one O'clock and the Working Committee was still sitting Up till then I could not present myself before Mahatmaji I took my meal at the Ashram itself Among the Committee were Pandit Motilal Nehru and Maulana Mahomed Ali I saw also the Congress Treasurer, the noted Marwari leader, Seth Jamnalal Bajaj High in stature, speaking in a loud voice, he could gain the ear of the committee by his emphatic and pointed manner of speech There I noticed also Maulana Mazrul Haque, the founder and soul of the Sadakat Ashram His hair and his beard had all turned silvery with age That he ever had lived the life of an England-returned barrister could not be traced even in the faintest way in his lineaments, or his garments He had cultivated long beard, and he looked the very picture of an old-world Mahomedan patriarch

Heavy rains had fallen overnight, and the whole of the morning, with intervals of intermission, it was drizzling Thus, in many places the Ashram was under water, and moving about became irksome Here for the first time, I saw a meeting of the Working Committee In those days of August 1921, the tide of enthusiasm for Swaraj among the people at large had risen to its full height, and all had been working heart and soul No one doubted but that Swaraj was near at hand Then each single decision of the Congress Executive was receiving at the hands of the people greater honour than even the laws of the Government If Swaraj was won, then this very Working Committee would function as the Government of India And seeing the same Committee holding its meeting in this cottage amidst such humble surroundings and slush and water, an enchanting picture of Swaraj that was to be, unfolded itself before my

vision Hitherto our political movement had been confined to a handful of English-educated people In all matters, our older leaders had followed in the footsteps of Europeans It would have been an impossible feat for our older leaders to come together to discuss the nation's affairs in a damp place like this, regardless of the rainy weather, and putting themselves to so much inconvenience and bodily discomforts This is a poor country of ours, where two crores of people sometimes went famishing and sometimes have to live upon a half meal But would you find amidst the splendours and amenities of official surroundings at Delhi or Simla, even an inkling of such degrading poverty. Our elder leaders had worked the Congress on Western models, but Mahatmaji placed at the helm had turned the course of the Congress ship completely round That is why leaving behind them the splendours and enjoyment of palaces, the nation's honoured and recognised leaders thought it worth their while to enter this humble cottage to discuss the nation's affairs Just as we were poor, so must the Government reflect truthfully the people's condition Therefore a Government which would abandon all outward display but would be intent wholly and solely on furthering the welfare of the people should have to be formed and maintained Such a Government would have purity and unselfishness as its motive principle If thus the ideal of plain living and high thinking was inaugurated and established, then the Satyayuga or Golden Era would once more dawn upon the country, and the days of Ram Raj, so often spoken of by Mahatmaji, would no more remain a utopia, or a matter of mere conjecture

Thus I sat musing and watching the eager throng

intent to have a view of Mahatmaji Unless one saw it with one's own eyes, one could hardly realise how very difficult it was to keep them back When the proceedings of the Working Committee had been over, and the other leaders had left, Professor Kripalani conducted me into Mahatmaji's presence He looked very pleased when I went and made my salutation by touching his feet I first gave into his hands a report of his Sasaram speech prepared by me "So my report also is here! Very good, indeed!" With these words of exclamation he gave vent to his joy like a child When I saw him so very pleased and happy, I felt perfectly at ease So when Professorji mentioned about my teacher's letter and proceeded to read it out, but had to halt at times owing to the indistinctness of the handwriting, I made bold to take it from his hands and myself read it out to Mahatmaji At places the letter was highly eulogistic of Mahatmaji Thus, Mahatmaji by initiating the method of non-violent warfare in the domain of political agitation, had discovered a path for the abatement of world's wars and hostilities and the quenching of the fires of international hates and jealousies The movement of peaceful non-co-operation if successful in India would prove to be a means of the world's deliverance Representing in his own person the non-violent spirit, Mahatmaji had set in motion strong forces in favour of non-violence, and my contact with him was bound to cleanse me All these and similar terms of high praise the letter contained, and Mahatmaji hanging down his head in bashfulness listened

The reading of the letter over, Mahatmaji looked at me smiling, and spoke in Hindi "Well, for the present you

can come along with me As to the future, we can decide that afterwards" Thus did he make me one of his own party Our business with him having come to an end, we took leave of him and came inside the cottage Professor Kripalani in sheer joy went on telling me that no longer should I keep myself in the background out of shyness, but that I must make bold to come forward and walk ahead in a crowd Otherwise, I should get buried among a sea of heads By long association with Mahatmaji, he had acquired considerable experience in this sort of matter Undoubtedly, I must make all necessary efforts to keep pace with what was required of me in my present environment, but I was not quite sure whether I was fitted by character for the kind of ready action which was necessary if I must march ahead of a crowd

Presently the order for our departure came From the Ashram, we must first go to the National School, from there Mahatmaji would go and attend a public meeting Then towards evening we must leave for Calcutta by the Punjab Mail

In company with Professor Kripalani I came to the National school before Mahatmaji arrived I found the whole of the school premises filled with people As soon as a car was sighted, they sent up loud cries of joy Mahatmaji was not in our car, but we were greeted with the same cheers One ascetic, in particular, whose whole body was besmeared with ashes lay down at full length on the ground, face downwards, with a view to give us salutations, and went on repeating this process of salutation, as if performing a sort of physical exercise When after this Mahatmaji arrived, the enthusiasm of the people knew

no bounds It is strange that his presence in a crowd should work such sudden transformation of character. But as for himself, he would retain his imperturbable gravity and would not look one way or another, but with steady, persistent attention would go on doing his own work When he arrived, with rapid steps he made straight for the apartment reserved for him, and took his seat on a carpet There, the whole crowd besieged him So to approach him became a matter of extreme difficulty Even in the midst of this crowd, the Working Committee had a second sitting Supporting himself on his left elbow and reclining against a pillow he sat looking calm and composed Pandit Motilalji was placing before Mahatmaji one proposal after another, and was asking him for his views on each The answers he gave were wholly devoid of parade or of wordy ingenuity He would not utter a single word beyond what was absolutely necessary Such was the manner in which the business of the meeting was being transacted But there were people among the crowd clever at talk and sufficiently forward who would make their way to Mahatmaji and put him all sorts of desultory questions To these also he gave suitable answers. But when these people would thus by way of talk monopolise Mahatmaji, Pandit Motilalji would come forward and put a stop to such talk, and get the business of the meeting done I was sitting behind Mahatmaji, and for a long time was watching these going on But having been in the crowd for so long my nerves were getting restless. So I rose and sought rest in another room In the meantime the business of the Working Committee having been finished, it was time for Mahatmaji to leave for the public meeting He now summoned me and began to enquire in detail about

the things I carried with me, and whether I stood in need of anything else I told him that I had all that I wanted He then directed me to proceed straight from the school to the Railway station He on his part was preparing to leave but the stream of questions from the people around was ceaseless It seemed as if people's business with Mahatmaji had no ending In the midst of this hurly-burly, he had remembered me and given me instructions betimes to proceed to the station Since my interview with him at the Sadakat Ashram, I had no further opportunity of meeting him He was always so very busy that he had not a moment to spare, nor was it necessary for me, having no particular business of my own, to approach him Even without his asking me, I would have myself gone to the station in time But being a new man, I might commit mistakes, and therefore he had kept in mind that little item of instruction

Presently Mahatmaji left for the public meeting, the crowded fair of a gathering at the school premises melted away All outside people having departed, we of his party, as well as belonging to those of the other leaders, prepared to leave for the station Towards evening, Professor Kripalani, Ram Benode Babu, and a number of other friends came o the station to see me off There was a huge concourse of people there, and everybody was in mortal hurry to get n As the train was about to start I managed to get in omewhere Till then, I had always taken shelter behind rofessor Kripalani and had been nursed by his loving care nd attention But now I must learn to do without him and and wholly on my own feet The new associates were all

like this I was wholly in the dark as to where and why I was being led away under God's providence And so I felt sorely troubled at heart, but the fact that I was going in the company of such a great soul as Mahatma Gandhi infused hope in me and buoyed me up

CHAPTER IV

EN ROUTE TO ASSAM

We reached Calcutta on the morning of the 17th August Babu Shyam Sundar Chakravarthy, Babu Jitendralal Banerji and other well-known Bengali leaders had come to the Lilova station to welcome Mahatmaji The old familiar sights and scenes met my eyes everywhere But Mahatmaji was now Bengal's guest Being one of his party, I also felt as if I had got transformed into one of her guests, and so the old familiar sights had begun to wear altogether a new appearance At the Howrah station a large crowd had assembled in front of Mahatmaji's compartment The thought once crossed my mind that I would do well to go and see him, if only to make him aware that I was there as one of his party But the pressure of the crowd was too great for my strength At last I betook myself to a distant corner of the platform As soon as the train came to a stop the passengers all got down and hurried to and fro to leave for their respective destinations I had no idea where to go, nor had I been informed about it before Nor was Professor Kripalani near at hand to make things smooth for me Thus it was that amidst so much active preparation going on all around I alone stood passive and inactive. By this time Mahatmaji had got down from the train and had left surrounded by a huge concourse of people As I stood there debating what to do, a Guzarati gentleman of Calcutta discovered me. Mahatmaji had given him instructions to

seek me out I saw that although I might have remained inactive, he had not forgotten about me

As Mr C R Das was then away from Calcutta, we accepted that day the hospitality of his sister, Mrs Urmila Devi

We were to leave for Assam by the Darjiling Mail at five O'Clock Mahatmaji left early, as he had to address a public meeting in Mirzapur Park We did not attend the meeting, but made straight for the Sealdah station with the whole of our luggage

We were a big party bound for Assam Besides Mahatmaji among the leaders were Maulana Mahomed Ali Begum Mahomad Ali Maulana Azad Sabhani and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj With each one of them, there were some two or three others forming his party Besides, there were so many other people from Calcutta, who were all accompanying us in our journey On Mahatmaji s personal staff there was, besides Jamnadas and myself, a youth by name Prabhudas On him lay the duty of ministering to Mahatmaji's bodily wants and comforts In the Darjiling mail we two occupied the same compartment and I learnt from him that he was a son of a nephew of Mahatmaji s I could understand even from a brief intercourse with him that Prabhudas was an open-hearted soul

About ten in the night we arrived at Santahar, and changing train made ourselves comfortable in the Assam mail The crowd here was as great as it had been every where else But here we did not meet with much noise and confusion Mahatmaji had then taken to his bed, but he saw me and at once called me by name Then on my approaching him, he enquired if I had got acquainted with Mrs. Urmila Devi When I answered, 'No', he felt surprised.

Then like a near and dear one, he began to put to me various questions He enquired how old I was, whether I had parents living, in what college I had been educated, what particular books I had studied, and so on When I told him that I had not read at any College, his countenance beamed, and he showed an eagerness to learn about the particular system of education I had followed In a few short words I tried to explain my teacher's method of training But just then a few visitors came in and interfered with the course of our conversation Mahatmaji could not, therefore, proceed further

On the morrow, we had reached the borders of Assam, where one of the Assamese leaders, Mr Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, had arrived to accord Mahatmaji a warm welcome and escort him At every station at which the mail had to stop, we met a huge concourse of people and at every station in front of the office room a raised platform was improvised to serve as a dais As requested by Mr Bardoloi, Mahatmaji would alight from the train to receive the welcome of the people The moment he got down, the entire body of people forming the crowd would point towards him with their fingers and go on crying- 'lo' lo' there! there! they would be busy only with seeing him, and so in a number of places as the crowd could not be silenced, he had to return to his compartment without addressing them I had been near him since early morning I saw that he was ever busy with his own work Not a single unnecessary word would escape his lips, nor would he join in the talk of other people When he felt the fatigue of work, he would close his eyes and lie down and be silent for a while Then he would perhaps suddenly get up and resume writing On account

of the long railway journey, and the perpetual noise and bustle, all of us were feeling more or less fatigued He excepted, all of us were spending our time in idle talk, or in looking at outside objects and scenes from our train He alone uttered not a word, nor would he turn his attention to anything outside his own work

About 11-30 a m we reached Amingaon Station, where we were to leave the train and cross the Brahmaputra by steamer On the opposite bank was the Pandu station, and from there we were to motor to Gauhati That was the arrangement As soon as we boarded the steamer Mahatmaji sent for me and handed me a bundle of issues of the *Servant* (newspaper) I was required to find out and make cuttings for him of the "Four Letters on Non-co-operation" by Mr Andrews which had appeared therein The steamer was overcrowded, the entire body of passengers from the train was there, and there was hardly standing room anywhere He was then engaged in a most friendly chat, with a Eurasian couple from Chittagong, who having learnt that Mahatmaji was on board the steamer had come to pay him their respects He was asking them about their home, and about the joys and sorrows of their daily lives They were simply overpowered by Mahatmaji's kindness and were returning him thanks at almost every other word from his lips Since early morning Gandhiji had been looking austerely calm and collected It seemed as if his whole mind was rivetted to something internal, his whole look pointing inwards, and, therefore, on the outside, there was not observable the usual brightness of appearance But for the moment I found him an altogether different character Now he had become the incarnation of the spirit of delight,

and his talk and laughter radiated joy on every side, and captured the hearts of the people around him

Meanwhile, Maulana Mahomed Ali seeing an English girl before him was busy telling her a story The gist of the story was that in India at the time, there lived two brothers possessing huge bodies who were extremely vicious by character They would eat up living men and women, and if they came across a girl like her, they would swallow her at one gulp Then telling her that of the two brothers he was one, he burst out laughing The girl perceiving the humour of the story shyly laughed, as much as to say that she understood that he had been telling a false story Then the Maulana Saheb narrated to Mahatmaji the story of an English lady who had been travelling in the same compartment with him and who from her reading of the *Englishman* and other papers had imbibed a queer impression about the Ali brothers But when she became acquainted with him in the train and came to find that he was one of the two brothers her surprise knew no bounds and she had to confess how sadly mistaken she had been Thenceforward from a bitter enemy of Non-co operation, she had turned into a sympathiser I had no experience of Maulana Shaukat Ali, but from what I had seen of Mahomed Ali it was clear that his very simplicity was bound to capture one's heart The style of his talk, his loud, hearty laugh, and the forcefulness of his character were all the expression of a unique personality

When the steamer reached Pandu station, and I saw the immense crowd there, I was afraid lest I should be left behind Everyone else of our party, whether Guzarati, Mahratti, Marwari or Moslem, could be distinguished by his

dress or his cap, but I was a Bengali, bare-headed like the Assamese, with nothing to distinguish me about the dress I felt that it might, therefore, be difficult for the people to make out that I formed one of Mahatmaji's party With this thought in mind, I did not wait there, but made straight for the car reserved for Mahatmaji, and took my seat there in the company of Prabhudas Large bodies of people had come all the way from Gauhati to welcome Mahatmaji, and the well-known leader of Assam, Mr T Phookan, was in this car escorting Mahatmaji

CHAPTER VII

GAUHATI

At Gauhati Mahatmaji stayed at Mr Tarun Ram Phookan's place In front of his residence was a wide extended open lawn where not less than fifty thousand people could assemble in meeting Beyond, was the public road, and further beyond was the river Brahmaputra The whole lawn had been fenced round to keep back the crowd who might otherwise have invaded our quarters and troubled Mahatmaji At short intervals in the fence, arches had been put up, where night and day volunteers kept guard This, of course, kept the crowd out, but the workers who had assembled from all the different parts of Assam to invite Mahatmaji to their respective towns formed a goodly crowd by themselves Thus not for one moment was rest or peace to be found The incessant noise almost drove one mad I wondered how long we should be able at all to stand the strain of such noise after the fatigue and exhaustion of our previous journey

On the maidan in front of our residence a public meeting was held in the evening According to my estimate some twenty five thousand people must have assembled there A little to the right of Mahatmaji s room was put up a raised platform for the accommodation of the leaders I was there for a short while to listen to Mahatmaji's speech. I soon returned and watched the proceedings from our house Mahatmaji's speech was rendered into the Assamese language by Mr Phooken About 9 P M the meeting

was dissolved, but the moment before, Mahatmaji speaking for a second time made, a feeling appeal to the assembly as follows —"What special object had they in inviting and bringing him to such a distant part of the country as this? Would they content themselves with merely hearing him speak and then quietly return to their homes? Or, was it their object to allay his heart's agony by helping him in redressing the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, and in the winning of Swaraj or Freedom for India? If, indeed, they had come merely to hear him speak he begged them all with clasped hands not to trouble him further, but permit him to go back" When this part of the speech was explained by Mr Phookan to the whole audience of Assamese, a wonder ful scene followed For the space of a whole minute almost the place was stilled into complete silence The minds of all seemed to have for a moment become rivetted to one single thought, and the whole audience was moved by a singualr unanimity of feeling When in a river the flood-tide comes, closely following upon the ebb tide, then for a time the current flows neither way, and there is perfect calm, but the next moment with a roar comes the flood sweeping everything before it Much like this was the scene that followed at the meeting When the full meaning of Mahatmaji's appeal dawned upon them the whole audience after a momentary pause, with one voice broke out into a thundering roar, saying—"No, No, that must never be, we can never allow you to leave us and go back in the way proposed" He would presently test the genuineness of their enthusiasm, said Mahatmaji rejoining "If, indeed, they longed for Swaraj, and if their anxiety to take him to the other places of Assam was at all sincere, let them

surrender the foreign clothing they had on and cast them into the fire he would be presently lighting" This said, he set fire to the huge collection of foreign clothes lying in front of the platform At that time a sort of frenzy seized the whole crowd, and from all sides foreign clothing rained in heaps upon the burning pile In the crowd some there were who were seen to cover their nakedness with their towels or their chudder,* consigning their dhoties† to the flames My pen fails to portray the fit of divine enthusiasm that had seized the audience In such large quantities were clothes offered to the sacrificial fire that it kept on burning till the whole of the succeeding morning

Mahatmaji slept that night on the verandah adjoining his room, while I lay in an easy-chair by his side Near by a volunteer kept guard all the night through The Assamese volunteers had captured my imagination Their discipline and endurance were only equalled by their spirit of devoted service Since we had been here, we had not to bestow one single thought on anything concerning our own selves For the one thought of these volunteers was that we suffered not the least inconvenience Their spirit of service, the sweetness of their temper, and their capacity for work filled us with high hopes about the future of Assam

Getting up early in the morning, and finding him alone for a while, I handed him the cuttings from the *Servant* containing Mr Andrews' "Four Letters" I told him also the gist of those "letters" When I had finished, he merely gave a nod So many people would be constantly

* Sheet of fine cloth thrown loosely over the body

† A dhoti is a long piece of cloth worn round the waist by Indian males

crowding round him that if per chance he could snatch a few moments of spare time, he would spend them wholly on his work of reading and writing One is simply amazed to find how in the midst of all this confusion he could keep his head cool, and get through the prescribed course of his work Under such circumstances, ordinary people would go mad When after such incessant work, he would be left alone for a while, I would not come near him for fear of disturbing him That is why I had refrained from placing before him those articles on the day previous nor had he himself asked for them My belief is that having given an order to anybody, he would not put pressure upon him, but would patiently wait and see whether the instruction was actually carried out He would, it appeared to me, test people's sense of responsibility by noting whether the work was got through smoothly enough That morning, once or twice, I had seen him perusing the report I had prepared of his Sasaram speech He could hardly have finished reading it, for after every two or three lines of reading, visitor after visitor came and caused interruption Since morning he had gone out on three or four occasions attending different meetings There was the meeting of the Marwari merchants, another of Assamese ladies, and a third of Bengali ladies

During our second day's stay at Gauhati, late in the afternoon, another huge meeting was held on the same maidan His speech over, Mahatmaji quickly returned to partake of his meal, for it was his practice to take nothing after sunset As neither Jamnadas nor Prabhudas was at home at the time, he called me and asked me to get his meal ready The meal over, he again went out, having given me

instructions to keep hot water ready, and the other things necessary for his evening bath When about to depart, he asked me to write out a report of the speech he had just delivered for submission to him When I enquired if it was to be a lengthy one, he said that a brief report might do, but it was necessary that all important matters and ideas shall be incorporated in it

In that speech of his he had replied to the various letters he had received from many educated Assamese in which they had given expresion to their regret that in his "Hind Swaraj", or "Indian Home Rule" he had treated the Assamese as belonging to the same category as the Bhils, Pindaris and Thugs, and other such wild tribes Mahatmaji said that the book had been composed in 1908 during his sojourn in England Till then he had not come in contact with any native of Assam, nor had he then any first hand knowledge of the country His knowledge of Assam had, in fact, been derived from one or two English books From a study of these books he had been led to infer that Assam had not evolved any sort of civilisation. Now, however, having seen Assam with his own eyes, he had realised his mistake. He further explained that in his book, he had said nothing which was intended to cast aspersions upon the people of Assam The English people had claimed that the reclamation of the uncivilised races of India was their exclusive work In going to refute that allegation, for want of a first-hand knowledge, and echoing merely the statements of the English themselves, he had cited the case of the Assamese people in the particular manner to which objection had been taken

After this explanation, the voice of complaint was no

further heard, but on the morning of the day on which Mahatmaji left Gauhati, some ancient relics of Assamese civilisation and culture were produced before him A certain antiquarian scholar showed him a number of ancient works in manuscript composed in the Assamese language One of these was a work relating to elephant lore which was interesting to a degree, and wholly novel in character Elephants were classified under various types, and each such type was described at length, while recourse was had to pictorial illustrations for the purpose of expounding its special features The analysis and investigation of the subject were carried out with such a minute nicety as to excite wonder Then we saw the Assamese translations of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata These were perhaps older than the Bengali translations Then we saw some old beautifully woven specimens of Assamese cloth, as old as a hundred years, but were so well preserved as to look quite fresh Next, we were shown how yarns for the famous Assamese cloth known as *Endi-muga* was produced Every home in Assam has a handloom of its own, and the women of Assam are all expert weavers In fact, no girl could be given in marriage unless she knew weaving In Barrister Mr Phookan's home also we found two looms, and a little girl gave a demonstration on them No more oral description could even have given us such idea of what Assamese civilisation was like, as their ocular demonstration Instead, therefore of attempting to establish the claim of their own culture by mere word of mouth, the Assam leaders did well to produce these visible evidences, and by so doing were able the more easily to enlist Mahatmaji's sympathies on behalf of their own province

Assam has many close points of contact with Eastern Bengal It seemed to me that the soil and crops of Assam, her mighty rivers, and the manners and habits of her people, bore no small resemblance to those of Eastern Bengal. The vernacular of Assam is now being recognised as a distinct language, and the educated classes of the Province in their anxiety to preserve their separate entity have been latterly paying the deference and homage due to whatever is peculiarly Assamese But to me it appeared that Assamese had much in common with the spoken language of Eastern Bengal, the difference in script being neglıgible. The food of the people of Eastern Bengal and that of the Assamese, together with the respective modes of their preparation, were all more or less the same At least my experience at Gauhati pointed to that conclusion

CHAPTER VIII

TEZPUR

Leaving Gauhati, by steamer at 2 p m on the 20th August, Mahatmaji arrived at Tezpur on the morning of the 21st The whole night was thus spent on board the steamer The natural sights and scenes that met our eyes on the way were fascinating to a degree Under the shadow of encompassing hills, green with verdure, the mighty Brahmaputra pursued its course to its far distant goal, like a meandering sheet of white cloth girdling the waist of some unknown God From the river itself rose at intervals hillocks like so many islands Pointing to two such hillocks near Gauhati, an Assamese friend told me that many foreign travellers adjudged that landscape as superior even to some of the world renowned landscapes of Switzerland Where-ever we turned our eyes, we were enchanted by the green loveliness of the scenery. We were a large crowd on board the steamer, for Mahatmaji's following was now swelled by people from the Province itself As I had not yet been able to write out his Gauhati speech, I sought a secluded corner in the steamer, and tried to write But I was not left to myself for long Seeing that I was going with Mahatmaji, and that what was more, I was writing something, the crowd, out of sheer curiosity, pursued me wherever I went Finding that nothing could be done under the circumstances, I had to give up the attempt Standing near Mahatmaji for some time in the evening, I heard him conversing quite cheerfully Fascinated by the beauty of nature around

him, he had forgotten his austere devotion to work, and had assumed a natural attitude

Getting up early in the morning, we found ourselves enveloped in a dense, impenetrable mist But, as the captain knew by experience that Tezpur could not be far off, the steamer was slowed down, lest by mistake we should go ahead leaving Tezpur behind Then groping our way through the mist, we at last reached Tezpur By that time a heavy rain had began to fall, but its fury soon abated, and it had completely ceased by the time we reached our quarters

After taking some rest Mahatmaji sent for me and asked me to copy some English letters that he had written Not being able to follow his hand-writing correctly, I went wrong in making out two words and had to be corrected by him It was only after some practice that one could learn to read his hand I had not yet been able to give him the Gauhati speech, as I found it very difficult to concentrate my mind on the work in the midst of all that crowd and disturbance As that speech had not yet been finished, I did not attend the meeting at Tezpur, lest the two speeches should get mixed up in my mind, and I should make a mess of my Gauhati report Before going to the meeting Mahatmaji motored to a tea-garden at some distance from the town I heard that the meeting was a splendid one, Mahatmaji's speech being particularly impressive and moving I heard high praise of the masterly manner in which Mr Phooken had translated this speech His ability in this respect was, indeed, wonderful As soon as Mahatmaji would conclude his speech, Mr Phooken would get up and without a moment's thought, would render the

whole speech, word for word, into Assamese It was as though he forgot for the moment his individuality, and merged himself in Mahatmaji's for he would accurately reproduce every single argument advanced by Mahatmaji It is astonishing that he should not omit a single thought of the original Yet he gave out the translation in such an easy, unpremeditated manner with not even a single emphasis misplaced, that it seemed to the hearers as if it was an original speech and not a translation

The public meeting was followed by a couple of small special meetings, after which Mahatmaji took to silence, the morrow being Monday, his day of silence The silence would last for just 24 hours from Sunday night to Monday night On that day he would not talk to anybody, or do any outside work he would not even travel on that day, if he could help it During this period of weekly silence he was accustomed to write articles for *Young India* and *Navajivan*, or sometimes reply to his correspondence During silence if he had to question anybody, or say anything, he would write Whenever he wanted to call us he would strike something with the pencil in his hand, and we would run up to him He would also spend long hours in lying down I never saw him praying in the orthodox fashion, but I believe that he spent his Mondays, as far as possible in silent prayer No strangers were admitted into his presence on that day of silence except in case of special need and even those who were on his staff respected his silence, going about as softly as possible and talking in whispers For this reason, on Mondays alone, there was a lull in the usual hubbub, and we could enjoy some peace

On Monday, therefore, I availed myself of the respite

to write out the Gauhati speech I was unable to write out a short report like what we have in newspapers In my effort to preserve all the details of the speech my report had become long The silence being broken in the evening, I went and handed in my report to him He took it with great pleasure, and said that before his weekly articles for "Young India" were despatched, I must make it a point to read them He said that day he had sent an article of two columns on National Education He expressed the opinion that I could better enter into the spirit of an article by reading it in manuscript than in print In that way I should be able more easily to decipher his handwriting I informed him that not having been able to write out his Gauhati speech by that time, I had not attended the meeting at Tezpur He said it was not the proper thing to have done I must hear everyone of his speeches, as he never found time to give separate instruction to anybody He said also that he always gave expression to his inmost feelings in his speeches, and therefore I could, by listening to them, best come to get at his modes of thought, and understand his teachings I should also try to report his speeches, he said, in order that I might develop my powers of rapid composition

CHAPTER IX

NOWGONG

We got on board the steamer again at the Tezpur landing place at about 10 A.M. on the 22nd August After a short journey by steamer, we were to take train for Nowgong, and reach there on the morning of the 23rd Two or three spies had got on board, in spite of the fact that it was a special steamer chartered for Mahatmaji Mr Mahomed Ali, coming to learn of it, began to rage and threaten, and the poor fellows, hid themselves in fear in a dark corner When the volunteers came and asked Mr Phooken what was to be done with them, he, a genial, open-hearted gentlemen, laughed heartily at their plight, and let them remain where they were, Mahatmaji's bed had been spread out on the upper deck I went there for a while to arrange the things properly, and then getting down to the lower deck, laid myself down on a bench Shortly after Prabhudas came and sat there and told me that Mahatmaji had been speaking about me Although I was there at the time I had not understood the talk, as it was in Guzarati Prabhudas did not tell me what Mahatmaji had said, but just told me that he had been specially enjoined by Mahatmaji to look after my diet

Tired as I was after the day's toil, the cool breeze of the Brahmaputra soon lulled me to sleep and I did not know when the steamer had left or when it had stopped again When, Mr Hirowe, Secretary to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, woke me up and took me to the river bank, I found

that we had come to some unknown village far away from Tezpur It was then 3 O'Clock in the morning and the solemn stillness of the night pervaded the atmosphere There was no sign of human habitation near by, yet Mahatmaji's reception suffered not a bit A long line of plantain trees had been planted the whole way up from the river, and the whole route was beautifully illuminated with the help of three or four lights hung up on each tree We heard that a large crowd had gathered at the place in the evening We saw in the moonlight a roll of white cloth spread out into the far distance I was told by Hirowe that it was the crowd of people who had come from distant villages to receive Mahatmaji It is they who had gone to sleep on the river bank in that weird fashion All praise to their enthusiasm to their patience! If we had arrived early in the night, Mahatmaji would have been received here and everywhere else, with the shouts and rejoicings of the multitude, but the solemn grandeur of this reception in the illumined silence of the night was unforgettably impressive There was a short walk to the station from our landing-place and some four or five of us proceeded in advance by an unfrequented path to the station with the idea of going to sleep in the train My friend, Mr Hirowe, was a Mahratta of Ujjain, far from being awed by the dead silence of that night in far off Assam, he seemed rather to enjoy it with keen zest

Reaching Nowgong in the morning, we were confronted by a true picture of what the Assamese Government was like We had not witnessed this sort of thing before The Deputy Commissioner of the place had dreamt dreams of riots and breaches of the peace on the advent of Mahatmaji,

the very apostle of peace, and had made elaborate arrangements to cope with the coming disturbances A large body of police men had been posted at the Station, and barricades had been put up on the roads to prevent the coming of the crowds At the station no carriage being available in that small town, an Indian tonga* was waiting to take Mahatmaji and Maulana Mohamed Ali in procession through the town The rest of us did not accompany the procession, but walked directly to our appointed residence, a distance of a mile and a half Last night none of us had slept for more than two hours and we were all more or less fatigued After bath and meal, Mahatmaji attended a meeting of Marwari merchants held at his own place Then he went off to the ladies meeting after which he was to attend a public meeting At the place originally fixed up for the public meeting the dais had been put up, but the Police had occupied the place the previous night under orders of the Deputy Commissioner, on the plea that it was a public place So a new site had to be chosen and cleaned for the purpose in the course of the same night and another dais had to be put up and other arrangements made But the enthusiasm of the volunteers was equal to the task. They had done everything with their own hands from the sweeping of the ground to the erection of the dais in the course of the very same night

Maulana Mahomed Ali was the first to speak at the meeting After describing in his own powerful style the various ills that afflicted India, he pointed out that the attainment of Swaraj or Freedom was the only remedy, and further that there could be no Swaraj without Hindu-Muslim

* A small two-wheeled vehicle drawn by a horse

Unity His was a long speech, but it made a great impression Mahatmaji followed Maulana Saheb He said that he would say in a few words what he had to say, and then set fire to the pile of foreign cloth that the people of Nowgong had collected for a bonfire He said that he had been officiating at this *Yagna* or holy sacrifice at every town that he had visited It was his firm belief that by such "Sacrifice" alone could India's dormant power be roused. He pointed out that India's present degradation was due to the people's lack of moral power and that the development of that power alone would lead to the attainment of Swaraj, and along with it, the redressing of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs He said that in that day's *Englishman* had appeared an open letter addressed to him by Dr Pollen It was the Doctor's contention that when he (Mahatmaji) had called the Government 'satanic, he had forgotten that Satan's empire could extend only over those who were themselves satanic in spirit Therefore, in calling the Government 'Satanic', Mahatmaji had been really condemning his own countrymen Mahatmaji admitted the truth of this charge, and said that it was precisely for that reason that he laid so much stress on the need for self-purification Hindu-Muslim unity, Swadeshi, and the practice of Ahimsa were but so many steps on the road to such purification He added that there was nothing like sacrifice to purify the heart and the soul Taking the Swadeshi vow, and sacrificing all foreign cloth would necessarily lead to self-purification They should all, therefore, give away their foreign cloth and take to spinning and weaving, thus learning to trust to themselves for their needs If a programme of the boycott of foreign cloth could be completed by the 30th of September

of that year then the attainment of Swaraj in October was by no means improbable But if this work remained unfulfilled, he would frankly tell them that India was yet unfit for Swaraj

On our way back from the meeting, we found a police force stationed along the road with their long *lathis* and preventing the passage of any but a few at a time When the Deputy Commissioner saw that he could not prevent the meeting, he had issued orders against two local leaders, making them responsible for any breach of peace, and prohibiting a procession The leaders, seeing through the official game, instructed the people to disband themselves and quietly go home Returning from the meeting, we proceeded straight to the station Owing to the orders of the Deputy Commissioner, there were not many people then at the station We were thus able to leave Nowgong in peace, and some of the more witty spirits amongst us gave their hearty thanks to the Deputy Commissioner for the service he had done us by issuing the order

CHAPTER X

JORHAT

We passed the whole night in the train On the morning of the 24th August, we stopped at Titabar Station, where we changed train, and in the course of the same day arrived at Jorhat We had hitherto been travelling due east through an altogether unfamiliar country, and it seemed as though our journey would have no ending It was a surprise to find how Mahatmaji's name had penetrated into those remote corners of Assam Even in the depth of night, we could hear cries of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jay" (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) at every station where the train had to stop It had become so familiar a thing to hear these cries from the lips of large multitudes that ordinarily it would not attract our attention But hearing it in these distant solitudes of Assam, our curiousity was roused, and we could not help looking out of our train At many a small station we saw people assembled from distant villages, and waiting with lighted torches for Mahatmaji's Dharshan * Those who have been brought up in the lap of luxury in towns and cities, and whose eyes have become habituated to gas and electric lights, might view with amusement or contempt the torch-lights, the half-naked bodies, the rustic talk and the manners of these poor illiterate countrymen of ours, but more than anything else such a reception as this was eloquent of the power of the movement, and the extent to which Mahatmaji's influence had permeated the masses

* A view of Mahatmaji as an auspicious thing

It was 8 or 9 in the morning when we reached Jorhat. After holding two or three meetings that day, we had again to pack up and leave in the evening Owing to heavy rains overnight, there were pools of water on the site chosen for the public meeting but the meeting was held there nevertheless While the meeting was on, the sun suddenly shone with such fierce blaze that a couple of persons fainted on the spot In the middle of the meeting a couple of robust Gurkha sepoys came elbowing their way through the crowd, and stood just in front of the platform facing Mahatmaji and Maulana Mahomed Ali They were grim, fierce-looking, forms while they began surveying everything from end to end Maulana Mahomed Ali who was speaking at the time, had a word or two in reference to them also in his speech But when he sat down the whole assembly rang with joyous cries of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi," the scene moved even the hearts of the Gurkhas. They could no longer preserve their haughty looks, their frightful mien suffered a sudden change, and they joined the crowd in their loud cries of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi" I followed them for some distance after the meeting had broken up I found them walking as if in a delirium of joyous excitement. It was there that I could realise how infectious was the collective enthusiasm of a crowd, and how rapid its working The language, the feelings and associations of the Gurkhas were so different from those of the crowd and yet their haughty courage had to bow before the power of this collective moral force

In the evening we took the light Railway from Jorhat. After going as far as Mariani by this line, we were to take next morning the bigger train of the Assam Bengal Railway

for Dibrugarh The Jorhat line was the narrowest gauge line that I had seen in India The carriages looked like so many toys Sometimes one could even run faster than the train The carriages were in such bad repair that, when the train began to move, we were afraid that the whole might come down with a crash The doors once opened would not close again At night there was no light in the train. Such was this railway line, and we were to travel by a special train on that line But that night's experiences of the special train could never be forgotten I had not had any rest throughout the day and so I went to sleep, as soon as I got into the train We had been told that the train was to leave at ten o'clock, but we found no proper arrangement at the station itself Apparently there was no fixed time table on this line, no bother about " Line clear " and other things of the kind, they could start at any time that they liked In my sleep, I knew not when the train had started, but suddenly, when the night was far advanced, we were roused from sleep by a sudden shock Starting up, we began to raise a hue and cry The train had then stopped. Some of us, going out to enquire about the matter, learnt that our train had collided with a couple of carriages that had got detached from behind the train that had preceded us, and had been blocking the line None of us had sustained any injuries but we were at a loss to make out how our train was to proceed, the road being blocked With no other alternative before it, our train began slowly to labour on, pushing the blocking carriages before it Our little engine could hardly muster enough energy for this work, the poor thing had to stop at every step to take breath, in the midst of this pushing and

fuming When we had proceeded for about a mile in this fashion, the guard came running with a Deitz lantern in hand, and fell to abusing the driver We then came to learn from him that, in the midst of our train's desperate effort, Mahatmaji's carriage had dropped out from the rear, and been left far behind us We all came out to see how things stood and discovered that Mahatmaji's carriage had in fact been left behind We were beside ourselves with fear We were taking along with us one who was the life and soul of India, and each one of us, we felt was responsible for his safety and welfare more or less But here we had cast him away in the dead of night in a wilderness with nobody by his side We then called upon the driver to back the train, and as the train moved back, we all stood on the foot board and kept looking out with eager, outstretched gaze When after traversing a long distance we sighted Mahatmaji's carriage in the moon-light, all of us ran up and stood about his carriage Seeing us all he burst out laughing, nor could we trace the least anxiety or fear in his countenance He laughingly told us that he had not thought that we should return, but was rather expecting that a train from behind would come and overturn his carriage Even a serious mishap like this did not make him anxious, nor did he show any signs of displeasure at his being deprived of his nightly rest, nor did we hear from his lips one word of disparagement of the Railway authorities at this incredible mismanagement on their part

CHAPTER X.

DIBRUGARH

Owing to the mishaps of the night, we were very late in reaching the Mariani Station, where when we came up, the train of the Assam-Bengal Railway was waiting ready to start It had been specially detained for us As soon as we arrived, we made haste to get into it The people at the station helped in carrying our luggage and putting it into the train as quickly as possible. In Assam, Mahatmaji, was everywhere treated with Royal honours The volunteers had hoisted two large tri-colour national flags and they were floating on either side of Mahatmaji's compartment As Mahatmaji disliked travelling in pomp and grandeur, he begged that the flags might be removed, but they were not taken away Dibrugarh is a great centre of the tea-industry It is therefore a place where many Englishmen would be continually coming and going on business In our train, too, there were some English passengers, who did not like Mahatmaji's making a triumphal progress with flying colours Now, as the train was moving very fast, the big bamboo pole to which the left-hand flag was attached, struck violently against a post. and broke in two, and the flag getting detached was seen flying away At this, three or four Europeans looking out of the train, fell to clapping and shouting for joy On the train itself, at the doors at short intervals were able Assamese volunteers wearing distinctive turbans keeping

guard One of these, seeing the flag fly off, caught hold of it at great personal risk, and held it out with outstretched hands with his face towards those Europeans At this exhibition of uncommon courage and celerity they hung down their heads in shame and disappeared from view out of the train To-day when I think of this little incident, my heart goes out in admiration to the Assamese For methinks when our English officials who having flung Mahatmaji into prison should boast of having broken up the flag-staff of the Non-co-operation movement, they shall see how, in every province of India, the flag would be caught up once again, and firmly held in the hand, and then, they, too, shall have to hang down their heads in shame like these English planters of Assam

The train having stopped at a particular station on the way, Prabhudas took me to Mahatmaji's compartment, and gave me some fruits to eat Then I saw Mahatmaji reading and correcting my report of his Sasaram speech He had been reading it carefully word by word, and handing it to me, asked me to note the corrections he had made After I had read it, he sent it for publication in *Young India* As I found Mahatmaji looking grave at all times, I rarely went to him unless sent for I suppose he assumed this seriousness in order to get through his work Once or twice, I had even seen him cooling his forehead and head with ice And yet everyday, whether in his room or in the train, he would go on calmly and patiently writing articles for the *Navajivan*, and *Young India*, while all around him people were making noise and the crowds were howling outside Such complete mastery over the mind seemed to me unique When he had done with the report of the Sasaram speech,

he took up that of his Gauhati speech, but put it by, having looked through it a little

At 12 noon on the 25th August, we reached Dibrugarh, almost the easternmost extremity of Assam, from where our return journey was to begin We were to stay there the whole day and till 2 P M the next day, when we were to take the train for Silchar. From Silchar we were to proceed to Sylhet, thence to Chittagong and from Chittagong to Barisal *via* Chandpur, and from Barisal after a day's stay, we were to come back to Calcutta on the 4th September Invitations had poured in from Comilla, Khulna, and other places, but Mahatmaji had declined them all He was bound to reach Calcutta before the 6th September, as on that day a meeting of the Working Committee had been arranged

Reaching Dibrugarh, I took my bath and meal and was resting for a while when I was sent for by Mahatmaji He gave me some telegrams to despatch, and then asked me to compile for his use, from Gazetteers and other Government publications, all material facts and figures about tea-plantations and the conditions of labour in Assam Just then, came Mr. Nabin Bardalai, who had all the facts concerning Assam at his finger's end, and who promptly answered every question put to him by Mahatmaji The astonishing mastery of facts and figures relating to Assam shown by Mr Bardalai was a revelation to me

At Dibrugarh Mahatmaji took special trouble to gather information on the conditions of labour in the tea-gardens As that night's meeting was to be his last in Assam, he wished to address some words of comfort to the poor oppressed labourers It was in his name that the labourers

had come out of the tea-gardens at the time of the Chandpur trouble, but it was not possible then for him to come and stand by their side. Now that Mahatmaji was in Assam the planters were in mortal dread that his visit should revive the excitement of those days. The planters had therefore taken to threats and so cowed the labourers that they dared not come to meet Mahatmaji. Thus when at the night's public meeting desiring to know how many labourers had actually attended the meeting, Mahatmaji called upon the labourers present to raise their hands, it was found that not more than three or four had the courage to do so, notwithstanding that the audience numbered some ten to fifteen thousand. Secretly, however, a cooly had already come and seen Mahatmaji at his residence, and given him a full account of their woes.

At the public meeting, Mahatmaji gave expression to some of his deepest thoughts and convictions. He explained what sort of Swaraj it was that he craved for India, and how a whole-hearted pursuit of Swadeshi, even as a religious discipline was essential for the attainment of such Swaraj. The mere transference of political power into the hands of Indians from those of Englishmen would, indeed, be a sort of Swaraj. But he argued that the test of its genuineness lay in the answer to the question, whether it had brought peace to the hearts of the poor, whether it had enabled them to live happy, contented lives. If these questions could not be answered in the affirmative, then India had nothing at all to gain from such Swaraj. There were in Assam almost a million labourers who had come from different provinces of India to earn a bare subsistance, and Mahatmaji declared how unnatural, from a social point of

view, it was that so many poor Indians should be driven to leave their homes, their families, their friends and their communities, merely to get the wherewithal to live. If this state of things could not be changed under the new regime then the attainment of Swaraj would be a snare and a delusion. That was why he had been laying so much stress on spinning and weaving, and the wearing of *Khaddar*.* And Mahatmaji went on explaining at length that the country's welfare could not be completely secured and the woes of the poor removed, unless each and every home had learnt to depend on itself for its clothing, much in the same way as each home has learnt to prepare its own food, instead of being dependent for it on hotels. It was, therefore, a religious duty for them to take the vow of Swadeshi, and it was because the use of foreign cloth was a deadly obstacle to the fulfilment of that duty that he was never so happy as when destroying it wherever it was found. Not being able to understand aright his feeling about the matter, many he said, had been finding fault with him on the ground that it was a feeling born of hatred of the foreigner.

But his answer was that if they would but calmly bethink themselves of the volume of suffering that foreign cloth had brought in its train, of the many millions that had died of famine, as well of those who had been dragging on a miserable existence on empty or half filled stomachs, then they could not help agreeing with him in regarding such foreign cloth as truly impure and untouchable. He burnt foreign cloth not out of a spirit of hatred of foreigners, but in the spirit in which they would burn the clothes of a plague-stricken man. That was why he felt never so happy

* Handspun and handwoven wearing material.

as when destroying foreign cloth worn by Indians The sin of wearing foreign cloth was, in his mind, worse than the sin of using intoxicating drugs, all the more so because it was an unconscious sin Hence, it was that, in speaking of self-purification, he gave as important a place to the boycott of foreign cloth as to the avoidance of intoxicants, and the control of the evil passions of anger, violence, hatred and the like

In every town of Assam he had visited, Mahatmaji had made a bonfire of foreign cloth, but at Dibrugarh alone no arrangement had been made for the same The enthusiasm of the people however was by no means less here than elsewhere, but the work suffered for want of a devoted and selfless leader Mahatmaji was very sorry that he had not been able to make this holy sacrifice on that the last day of his stay in Assam Seth Jamnalalji, instead of accompanying us to Jorhat, had gone straight to Dibrugarh from Nowgong The foreign cloth trade of Assam was all in the hands of the Marwaris, and Dibrugarh was a chief centre of that trade Jamnalalji, therefore wanted to stay with the Marwaris of his place for a few days, and induce them to take the Swadeshi vow Everywhere, at his instance, special meetings of Marwaris were held, at which they gave their signatures to a written promise, to boycott foreign cloth At some places they offered to give an undertaking not to import foreign cloth but only for one year To this Mahatmaji did not agree, for, from his point of view, in this matter of Swadeshi no yielding or compromise was permissible

Mahatmaji concluded his Assam programme with a friendly meeting and talk with the Planters Association at

Dibrugarh He was to leave Dibrugarh at 2 P M on the 26th August, and his visit to the Planters' Club had been put down for 10, O Clock on that day None knew whom he would take with him, and as he had told me nothing about it, I was not in readiness to go Meanwhile, Mahatmaji had left so that he might be there punctually at the appointed time Jamnadas, however, insisted upon my going and I drove in a carriage On reaching the club, I found Mahatmaji seated in the midst of Planters In the middle of the room was a big table, on one side of which were the seats for visitors Among the leaders, I saw Moulana Mahomed Ali, Seth Jamnalalji and some of the chief men of Assam. We were also there—Prabhudas, Hirowe and myself I had been given to understand that the planters of Assam wielded immense power and that common people dared not approach them But who could keep back the surging crowd to-day now that Mahatmaji was there? Even the commonest coolies, who usually fled at the sight of Europeans had group after group by stealthy steps advanced to the precincts of the Club, and finding that none prevented them had even dared to enter in, with the result that it became very hard to keep order inside As it was the wish of the planters that their conversation with Mahatmaji should remain private, no report was taken of any of the speeches made But the crowd made it impossible to hold a quiet private conversation There was so much noise around that it was a wonder that the planters could bear it all with such exemplary patience and quiet dignity. When, however, in response to a request from the President of the Association, Mahatmaji began his talk, then for once all noise was hushed I had never heard him speak in English

as all his speeches hitherto had been in Hindi, but when he made this speech, I knew not whether to call it a speech, or an inspired utterance pregnant with celestial force His style was altogether plain and unadorned, but every single word came from the innermost depths of his heart, and acted like a charm Hence the mere sounds of his words pierced and entered the hearts of his hearers As he went on talking in a solemn strain, it seemed as though he was casting a hypnotic spell over the audience, and irresistibly drawing all hearts to himself I noticed that, as he spoke there was no motion in his eyes, nor was there the slightest movement of the limbs It was clear to me that at the time his mind must also have attained a state of absolute calm For how else could his words create such an atmosphere of peace in the heart of the hearers? I had never before heard such criticisms, so truthful and yet so sweet and severe, as came from Mahatmaji's lips He detailed to his hearers all the charges that Indians could bring against the European planters, giving also at the same time all his previous personal experiences on the matter he was discussing I could hardly tell what power it was that had enabled him to win the planters so completely over, that in spite of the severe condemnation he had passed on them not only did none dare to raise his voice in reply, but speaker after speaker from among them rose to thank him for his fearlessness, outspokenness and to promise that they would in future try to follow the ideal that he had set before them

On Mahatmaji coming out when the meeting was over the crowd rushed at him, each man trying to elbow his way into his presence Prabhudas, Hirowe and myself, on

coming out, saw that the crowd round Mahatmaji was so great that it was hopeless for us to try to reach the car So advancing a little we stood on the road and waited, thinking that we might be given a lift when the car passed that way But as soon as the car started, the people began running after it, and we were lost in the crowd When the crowd broke up, as there was no carriage for us, we did not know how to get back None of us knew the way, and the time for the train was also approaching By asking a man we came to know that there was no chance of our catching the train if we started walking the distance, to our quarters So, instead of returning to our place, we made straight for the station, where soon after Mahatmaji with the other members of the party arrived There was a large gathering on the platform and outside, and everyone was trying to force his way into Mahatmaji's presence Fearing that this might lead to a rush, and that the crowd might get out of control, Mahatmaji got up on a stool or chair Now he was visible to everybody, even to those that had stood at a distance and no-body stirred from his place, and there was no more trouble

CHAPTER XII

ON THE WAY TO SILCHAR

From Dibrugarh to Silchar is a journey of 32 hours at a stretch, with three changes of trains on the way. In order to avoid the trouble of changing trains, a single bogie carriage had been engaged for us, with First, Second, Inter and Third Class compartments in it so that the carriage might be detached from one train and attached to the next. The unsurpassed delight and the uncommon trouble of this 32 hours' journey, neither, could ever be obliterated from memory. For the last 15 or 16 days we had been incessantly moving from place to place, and travelling in the train night and day, and it seemed as if all the vital elements of our physical body had perished. Following close on this, the strain on our bodies entailed by a continual journey of 32 hours with the velocity of the wind, could be appreciated only by those who have travelled long distances by rail. But on the other hand, to shake off the effects of this exhaustion, Nature for a space of 10 or 11 hours from the Lamding Junction has spread out her stores of weird, celestial beauty, along the Naga mountain range, creating a veritable dreamland, which whoso hath seen hath fulfilled his eyes' and mind's desire.

In the course of these 32 hours I had not been to Mahatmaji's compartment more than once, and that too was only for an hour between the Dibrugarh and Tinsukia stations, perhaps immediately after leaving Dibrugarh. Then I heard him ask with a faint smile on his countenance, how

far was that town of Assam whose people taking to heart that he had not visited it, had by a letter threatened to lie across the railroad, but as I had not heard of this, I could not understand what the matter was. When we reached Tinsukia, Prabhudas, Hirowe, and myself fixed up our beds at a convenient place and early in the evening we were lulled to sleep by the swaying train Sometime after, when the night had advanced we were suddenly aroused by the loud roar and excitement and shout of a large concourse of people Getting up, we noticed that it was 11 O' Clock, and that we had reached the Sivasagar Road Station, the very place, I believe, from where the people had sent that threatening letter to Mahatmaji In the meantime Mahatmaji had gone to sleep at 9, his usual hour, and Jamnadas was keeping guard in his compartment As soon as the train stopped at Sivasagar Road, the people tried to force their way into Mahatmaji's compartment with lights and with cries of Jai (victory) to rouse him from sleep, not caring to understand how essential it was that he should have perfect rest at night, if his whole days' programme of work had to be gone through Besides, in those critical times, even a single day's illness would have unsettled so many things, and we were particularly watchful that his night's rest was not disturbed When the people of Sivasagar tried to wake up Mahatmaji with their lights and their unearthly cries, Jamnadas tried his best to dissuade them, and when one or two of them not minding him tried to force themselves into the compartment Jamnadas blocked the passage and prevented their entrance By this time Moulana Mohamad Ali had woke up and hearing the terrible noise and cries in

front of Mahatmaji's compartment, came down and drove away the disturbers, at which they were beside themselves with fury We were all surprised to see that, inspite of all this uproar, Mahatmaji was still lying fast asleep But the loud cries of "shame" at the Moulana Saheb, and clapping of hands, caused such a tumult as to wake him up, and he hurriedly got up, and with eyes half sleepy, went and stood at the entrance asking what the matter was As soon as the boisterous crowd saw Mahatmaji they instantly forgot their anger, and all sat down kneeling on the platform with cries of rejoicing The driver now saw his opportunity, and without sounding the whistle, quietly moved the train out of the platform, and with one long pull reaching beyond the range of the seething mass, we found ourselves racing breathlessly along, through the dense darkness

The next day (27th August) the morning having a little advanced, the train when nearing Lamding Junction came to a sudden stop The station could be seen at a distance An English Railway official came hurriedly up with a number of servants, and intimated to Moulana Mohamed Ali that, as our train was late, the connecting train from Lamding had already left As there was no other train available that day, he proposed to attach our bogie to a Goods train which was just then leaving for Buderpore and Silchar Finding that otherwise we should be left stranded at Lamding for the whole of the day, Moulana Saheb readily agreed to this, and thanked the official for his civility Then the Saheb himself with all promptitude began shunting with the help of his men, and our bogie was attached to the Goods train According to the Congress classification of provinces, Mahatmaji's Assam

tour concluded with Lamding Beyond Lamding there is an impassable mountain range which forms the natural boundary between Assam and Bengal After traversing this mountain range we shall be able to reach the towns of Silchar and Sylhet in the Surma Valley As the Surma Valley is inhabited by Bengali-speaking people it has been included in the Bengal province by the Congress though politically it is under the Government of Assam At Lamding therefore, we had to bid farewell to our Assamese friends, and Mr Phookan left for Gauhati, followed by the indefatigable, ever cheerful, Goswami brothers and other Assamese volunteers

By this time the crowd that had been waiting on the Lamding station platform to have a sight of Mahatmaji, finding that our carriage had been attached to the Goods train moved up to us As a result of the Assam Bengal Railway strike following on the labour troubles of Chandpur many Railway servants had been left idle at Lamding They wanted that Mahatmaji should stay there for the day, and listen to the story of their sufferings Finding that I was the only Bengali in the company of Mahatmaji, many came to me, and gave expression to all sorts of fears Some said that we had to traverse difficult paths across the mountain range, and no train could be run there at night, so that if, we could not cross this awful region of mountains and dense forests sometime before it was evening, then indeed there was terrible cause for alarm Some even went to the length of affirming that the Railway official who had attached Mahatmaji's carriage to the Goods train, must have had a motive in doing so For if that train was let slip from a mountaintop, all worries and fears of the British Govern-

ment on Mahatmaji's account would vanish in a trice, while at the same time no particular responsibility would rest on its shoulders, because of the specious plea that the whole of the goods train had come down and been lost

I was, of course, not prepared to make a laughing stock of myself by carrying these tales of imaginary fear before Mahatmaji Soon the train started, and we began to enter into that impenetrable forest Even in the depths of these dense woods and mountain ranges there were stations at distances of 10 to 20 miles, and though there were no signs of any human habitation all round, small crowds had collected at every station, drawn by the name of Mahatmaji, eager to have a sight of him and to greet him with sounds of Jai (Victory to Mahatma Gandhi) I was struck with wonder to think how his name could possibly have penetrated into these trackless woods Arriving at one station we found that the special train of the Governor of Assam proceeding in the opposite direction towards Lamding, had arrived When the two trains were drawn up side by side, it seemed to me as though, we were witnessing the strength of the British Government and of Mahatmaji being weighed and measured in the balance against each other The Governor's train furnished and glittering shone like a mirror, and armed soldiers were keeping guard, but in spite of all *this pride of wealth and display of power, not one man of* the whole throng cast a glance in that direction, but all eagerly rushed up to the unsightly goods train in which Mahatmaji was travelling, and stood crowding about it. The bustle apparently disturbed the Governor's repose, and Mahatmaji s train was removed to some distance, but this only made the contrast between the strength weilded by

Mahatmaji and by the Governor all the more glaring. The Goverer's train deserted by all lay still at some distance like a lifeless thing, while whatever manifestation of life and movement there was, in that forest-clad, mountain-girdled region, was all centred round Mahatmaji's compartment

The wild, inaccessible nature of this region can be judged by the readers from the very names of the stations that we had to pass through after Lamding First, Hatikhali, then Lanting, Mupa, Maibang, Haflang, Jatinda, Mailandisa, and so forth When, after passing through many stations with names derived from some unknown tongue, ending with Damchara and Kachlichari, we reached a station called Chandranathpur, then from that familiar sound itself we could see that we had emerged from the forest into the world of men This Hill-Section of the Assam Bengal Railway is, indeed, a marvellous achievement of Englishmen One cannot help admiring their perseverance and determination, when one realises the extraordinary labour and energy that must have been required to construct a railway line across that inaccessible country I have heard that formerly herds of wild elephants used to infest the line and obstruct passage, challenging men's right to oust them from the sovereignty of their own domains and though latterly such accidents had become rare, trains were not confidently run on this section during the night Such a region, O! how full of terrors and yet how beautiful At one place peak after peak rises, one above another, as if aspiring to reach high heavens, on a hill the passing rain-bearing cloud comes and discharges itself in drizzling drops, on another, the sun's rays falling, sparkle and glitter, on still another, cloud and ray melting into each other encircle

the hill with a rainbow of superb beauty Here, the sunbeams struggling through a dense envelope of mist suffuse the whole atmosphere with a ruddy glow Still again at another place some proud mountain top defiantly rears its head against the sky, hiding the sun from view and casting the dense rows of trees below in a deep shade Seeing this beautiful alternation of light and shade, of cloud and mist, of sunlight and rain, and the blending here and there of nature's green loveliness with the ruddy glow of the atmosphere, it seemed to me as if, in this forest-clad region, day and night, morning and evening, held simultaneous sway, and the six seasons of the year were displaying in profusion, all at the same time, the wonders of their beauties Here and there are seen broad valleys among the mountains, with little torrents leaping from rock to rock in sprightly mood, and dashing along Sometimes a valley rising higher and higher by slow degrees seems to hold a distant peak on its lap, and so with peak after peak, as wave following wave, as far as the eye could reach At times when the train was climbing a mountain height with slow, difficult steps, it seemed as if like us, the train also, under the intoxication of the surprising beauty of the place, was finding its power of movement gone Observing the train's slow pace, in many a place had I in fancy been allured to step down from it,and entranced by that bewitching beauty seen visions of a life lived in a cottage under the shadow of those mountains and under the blue vault of the sky Prabhudas, who had been for sometime with Mahatmaji, now came and told me that Mahatmaji having seen with his own eyes the extraordinary beauty of the place marvelled greatly that such a paradise on earth lay hidden

in the jungles of Assam unsuspected by the world outside, and declared that although he had travelled far and wide in Europe, Africa and India, his eyes had not beheld another scene of such exceeding loveliness

It was night when we emerged from the mountainous country and reached the Buderpore Junction Large bodies of men from Silchar carrying loads of articles of all sorts have arrived at Buderpore to receive Mahatmaji The unalloyed peace and calm which we had been enjoying to our heart's fill among the mountains all the day long departed, and in the crush and the noise, Nature presented herself in a wholly different form Some may say that this is the living and dynamic aspect of nature while the other is static and devoid of animation But I have been face to face with, and have felt and understood the life that throbs in, and the consciousness that pervades, the wooded hills, and the brooks and the air and the sky and the clouds, in forest-clad Assam And now having beheld silent Nature's lovely form, and having heard in my inmost heart, her speechless, inarticulate messages, all activity of the outer world now seemed harsh and repulsive Here successive crowds of men like swarms of locusts had filled the place and encircled Mahatmaji and the sounds of their voice as they were exchanging words seemed to me at the time so insipid and rugged The dense darkness of the night then reigned all round, but outside the station, at a selected spot, had gathered a vast crowd with lights in hand to receive Mahatmaji Viewing this lengthy procession of lights and the huge concourse of men, it seemed to me as if, on the eve of hostilities, a vast line of troops were standing in battle-array When Mahatmaji was being escorted to the place

from the station, observing the dense darkness of the night we were greatly perturbed to think of the terrible consequences, if somehow order among the crowd gave way But we felt somewhat reassured when Mohammed Ali Saheb walking behind, but with outstretched hands on either side of Mahatmaji protected him from the encircling crowd Back again in the midst of men, it appeared as if under a spell of self-forgetfulness we had been insensible of the strain of this prolonged unbroken journey of 32 hours Now, dull slumber so relaxed and overpowered our whole frame that almost in a half-sleepy state, we reached Silchar at ten in the night, amidst the shouts of victory and the acclamations of the people

CHAPTER XIII

SILCHAR

At Silchar we set foot on the soil of Bengal, though even from Buderpore we had begun to breathe the Bengali atmosphere The Bengali heart and the Bengali language are just as soft as Bengal's soil, and consequently the heartfelt feelings of the Bengali find spontaneous expression in sweet verse and music The great Swadeshi agitation of Bengal had its beginning in a song, and had its growth in song And when the song ceased to be sung, the energy that had inspired the movement also ceased to work. Then in those days of Swadeshi in every village of Bengal new poets had come into being and all the highways and bye-ways of the province resounded with unceasing song In fact when I think of the Swadeshi upheaval of sixteen years ago, and contemplate what among the great things we had done was indeed the greatest, I cannot find anything greater than the revelry of song to which we had then abandoned ourselves The people of Silchar who had come to Buderpore to welcome Mahatmaji and escort him to Silchar began singing in chorus in the train, reminding me of the old Swadeshi agitation days They were, of course, expressing their joy in having Mahatmaji as their guest, in the way most natural to Bengalis But the other members of Mahatmaji s party not being Bengalis, and having undergone fatiguing journey were not in a mood to take kindly to so many people singing in chorus in a loud voice, and

Mahomed Ali Saheb called out to have it stopped, even while the train was in motion

At Silchar we put up at the house of Mr Kamini Kumar Chanda Mr Chanda having been unwell had gone down to Calcutta but returned the day after Mahatmaji's arrival In his absence, Mr Chanda's son Mr Arun Kumar acted as our host In Mahatmaji's party, were Jamnadas, Prabhudas, and myself (Krishnadas) This similarity of names misled Arun Kumar, who thought that Krishnadas (myself) must be like the others a Guzarati and he began his conversation with me in English

Seeing him talk in English, I thought I might as well follow his example and keep my matter a secret This, however, could not be for long, as Jammadas told him in private that I was a Bengali When he had heard about this, Mr Arun Kumar came to me laughing, and protesting that I had imposed upon him with my name, began to cultivate my friendship afresh Arun Kumar stole the hearts of all of us by his goodness, his simplicity, and his expert service, and Mahatmaji himself began to cherish an affection for him

We were so fatigued with the day's journey that we lay down to sleep for the night wherever we could find room, but the fatigue continued even on the day following Ever since joining Mahatmaji, I had not been able to find a spot where I could quietly sit and take rest even for two minutes together Only those who have had such experience can imagine how disquieting it is to have to spend all one's time with hundreds of people all about them I found in the morning that Mahatmaji was also looking much tired, and that he was trying to forget his fatigue by laughing and

playing with the many little boys and girls who had come to see him I was watching, and I saw how by a single affectionate look, he was able to draw the heart of a child to himself, and seeing the way in which he mixed with these children, one felt that his heart was more with them than with grown-up persons He took a child on his lap, and feeling his soft touch, it instantly fell into a sound sleep, then he lifted it from his lap with a laugh and put it into somebody else's lap All this time there were people crowding in his room, but they soon left and then he sent for me from the next room, and began to dictate a letter to an English friend After proceeding a little he stopped, but told me that I should get the work done some other time He then lay down and closed his eyes to take rest for a while

According to our programme we were to leave Silchar at four in the afternoon Mahatmaji returned in time having attended a public meeting and visited the National School As I was busy packing things and preparing to leave for the Station, I could not attend the meeting From Silchar to Sylhet was only about a hundred miles but it was a most tedious journey We should have to change trains at two stations, and at a Station called Kulaura, which was to be reached at midnight, we should have to wait till morning for the next train In order to save Mahatmaji all this trouble, the Sylhet people after taking considerable pains had succeeded at the very last moment to engage for us a special train So our departure at 4 O'clock was postponed

The special train was to leave at 9 or 10, in the night. It being Sunday night, Mahatmaji took to silence before

that hour Since reaching Silchar, I was much troubled in spirit I began to ask myself why I should be going about with Mahatmaji I knew not what sort of work he hoped to get done by me, as he had not given me any special work all these days From what I had seen of him, it did not strike me that he stood much in need of other people's help, as he personally attended to most of his work, and was apparently unwilling to depend upon anybody to get his work done The only work he had given me was the preparation of English reports of his Hindi speeches, and even that I had not been able to do to my satisfaction It was simply impossible for me to do any writing work in the hurry and bustle of our constant shifting and in the midst of the incessant noise and bustle of crowds It was out of the question also to think of settling down to any writing work —while travelling in an over-crowded Third Class compartment For all these reasons I had begun seriously to feel that, by going about from place to place in that fashion, with no particular work to do I was simply putting Mahatmaji to unnecessary expense on my account Thus in the course of a conversation with Prabhudas that evening, I unburdened to him the thought that was preying on my mind Soon it was time for the special train to start, and I left for the station beforehand with the luggage Prabhudas was left behind to accompany Mahatmaji in his car On the way to the station he had spoken to Mahatmaji about what was troubling me, but Mahatmaji had made no answer, as he was under his vow of silence All this I heard from Prabhudas as soon as he joined me in the train Before, however, the train left, a great tumult arose within the station precincts, but drowning the noise, the stern voice

of Maulana Mahomed Ali could be distinctly heard The fact was that some spies had tried to travel in the Guard's van in this special train, and Mr Mahomed Ali was holding out threats while ordering them to get away

CHAPTER XIV

SYLHET

We reached Sylhet on the morning of the 29th August It being Monday, Mahatmaji was under his vow of silence, and as he did not like to come in touch with outside people, he had written to me from the train itself to see that there was no procession, or the like I informed those who had come to escort him of this They explained to me that Mahatmaji's quarters had been fixed up in the vicinity of the Surma river, and he could therefore go straight to it from the station by boat After his departure, Maulana Mahomed Ali, Seth Jamnalalji and Maulana Azad Sobani could be taken in procession through the town to gratify the wishes of the general public I conveyed this reply to Mahatmaji, he nodded his assent, satisfied that his silence would be duly respected

Sylhet is situated on the bank of the broad Surma river, and is reached from the station after crossing the river by boat A large number of people had come in boats to welcome Mahatmaji, so that there was a regular fleet of boats on the river On the other bank of the river had also gathered a large concourse of people awaiting Mahatmaji's arrival Feeling that the people of Sylhet might not be properly acquainted with Mahatmaji's ways and habits, and that they might not appreciate how very anxious he would be to avoid meeting a crowd on the day of his silence and as a consequence they might be unable to make proper arrangements for him previous to his reaching his quarters,

I thought I must go in advance, and keep everything in readiness for him. Accordingly I left in a small *dinghie* (small country boat) with some volunteers When I had gone half-way, I noticed that Mahatmaji instead of being taken straight to his quarters, was being taken to the particular-*ghat* (landing place) whence the procession was to start It was long after we had reached our quarters that he arrived On his head and body were seen loose fragments of flowers that had been thrown at him during the procession by people among the crowd, his face was flushed, and he was looking extremely grave Immediately on his arrival finding Seth Jamnalalji before him he at once took pencil and paper, and wrote in Gujarati to ask why he had been subjected to all that trouble that day Jamnalalji in his turn asked the local Congress Secretary, who was there This was the same gentleman to whom I had spoken on the subject in the train but he had not been able to keep his word, and Mahatmaji, too, being under his vow, had not been able to prevent what had happened The Secretary, being confronted with the question and noticing Mahatmaji's pained look, at once admitted his guilt, and expressed his readiness to suffer whatever penalty might be imposed upon him But what penalty could Mahatmaji possibly impose? The people's eagerness to see him was quite natural, and they had flocked to Sylhet from all parts of the district in such large numbers that it demanded untiring effort on the part of the local workers to keep them under control In these circumstances it was indeed an extremely difficult task to get everything done in proper manner But the question was that if we failed even in this, was it possible for us to take upon our shoulders the responsibility of Swaraj?

We now began to feel keenly the want of an efficient body of volunteers like what we had seen in Assam, to look after Mahatmaji, and protect him from the crowds Hence I had myself to hurry about stationing volunteers at the proper places, so that the crowd might not invade Mahatmaji's room On reaching Sylhet, Mahatmaji lost no time in keeping me engaged He would give me written orders, and in that way got a good deal of work out of me Thus, I had been at work in his room from early morning until one O'clock, and then he gave me an article for *Young India* which he had written out in the train to copy

It was usual with him to write in pencil in big characters, and he had a diary in which he noted the numbers of pages and the date of despatch of each article That day he gave me work after work, allowing me no respite It was clear to me that this was the result of Prabhudas's conversation with him about me on the previous evening, though at the time he did not say anything because of his vow of silence

The volunteers soon acquired some experience and were able to keep out the crowd so that Mahatmaji was able to spend the afternoon in comparative peace

The people were no longer allowed to come near him But there came in a largely signed Bengali petition, in which the petitioners said that they had come from great distances in the expectation of seeing Mahatmaji, and that owing to the great rush of people, there was no room available in any hotel and even the stock of eatables in the bazaar had been well nigh exhausted, so that, unless they could leave for their home by the evening steamer, they would be forced to starve They therefore prayed that, if

only Mahatmaji would come and stand on the verandah they were prepared to leave the place after having had a view of him from a distance That day being his day of silence, and remembering the pain he had already felt that morning because of the people not having shown proper respect to that (to him) sacred day, I was hesitating whether I should take that petition to him or no But after some thought, I decided just to mention the matter to him, and in case he showed any unwillingness to reject the petition The moment, however, he heard of the suffering of the people, he went and stood on the verandah, saluting them with clasped hands, after which with repeated motion of the hand, he wished them to leave for their homes

Moulana Mahomed Ali was here the guest of the local Khilafat Committee He came once to see Mahatmaji when he showed him what had appeared in that day's paper concerning the Moplah outbreak of Malabar

Mahatmaji's silence was broken in the evening, and he prepared to start for the public meeting It was an open single horse carriage in which he was being conveyed to the meeting In the meantime so many people were anxious to come along with him that they had all got into it, and some were even standing on the footboard The horse was strong and robust, out Mahatmaji felt that it was too much of a load for it to carry He made vehement protests and offered to get down himself When the human load was somewhat lightened, he consented to proceed in the carriage

The meeting was held in the celebrated mosque of Sylhet There is not another like this in Bengal and Assam, and the report is that there are not more than three or four

like it in all India Inside the mosque there is accommodation for some five or six thousand Mussalmans to sit at prayers all at one time A dais on the western side of its raised courtyard was occupied by Mahatmaji, the Moulanas Mahomed Ali and Azad Sobani, and Seth Jamnalalji, while before them on the sloping ground sat a vast patient multitude row upon row Behind, in the space near the wall, were a considerable section of the audience creating disturbance in their effort to push their way towards the leaders, and Moulana Mahomed Ali was trying to pacify them with repeated shouts of "silence" When some order had been established, Mahatmaji began his speech in Hindi He began by saying that the Khilafat movement was a religious movement As soon as he understood that the Khilafat was one of the pillars of Islam, he had joined the Khilafat movement, in order to help in protecting the religion of his Mussalman brother He had deoated within himself deply and come to the conclusion that if he had treated the matter lightly he should have been answerable to God for his failure to exert himself to preserve the integrity of the religion of his brothers He also saw that Hindu-Muslim unity could be established in India on the basis of the Khilafat movement He felt that an opportunity like this was not likely to recur during the next hundred years, and so if they failed to avail themselves of it, the people of India should have for those hundred years to remain in a down-trodden state on account of the continuance of Hindu-Moslem jealousies and feuds Hence it was that he thought the Khilafat was intimately bound up with the question of Swaraj for India For the attainment of Swaraj they must follow the path of peace, if only for the reason that India

had not the power to use the sword against the English What little of fighting power remained in India to-day could only be exploited by the English to reduce other countries to their subjection, but it was not competent of itself to win Swaraj He repeatedly warned them therefore that if as the Government intended, there should be enacted scenes of anarchy and bloodshed in the country, the Government would at one fell sweep destroy their whole movement, and all India would be reduced to such suffering as that of Moplahs of Malabar, who had been giving their lives in hundreds for having killed some half-a dozen Englishmen in a fit of frenzy At the time of the Punjab atrocities only a comparatively small number of Punjabis had to crawl on their stomachs in a part of a lane in Amritsar but now, he said, if the people would resort to violence, the same humiliation would be meted out to entire India His suspicion was that the Government might soon arrest the Ali Brothers so that there might not be disorders in the country Then warming up, Mahatmaji said "If the Government wanted to arrest the Ali Brothers to-morrow, I would say let them be taken away this very day But in the same breath I would call upon the people not to go mad, but to keep their heads cool I demand sacrifice at the hands of my countrymen But the amount of sacrifice that I demand is far less than what is involved in giving their lives in fighting For if the Ali Brothers are arrested my demand would be that all the remaining lawyers should give up their practice, all students should boycott the official system of education, and realising that foreign cloth is impure and untouchable, people in general should take to wearing Khaddar, spun and woven by themselves If even this modest sacrifice be beyond

the power of this country, and if I live to witness this failure then I will proclaim to the world that for India Swaraj is not yet.'

After this meeting, he went to address a ladies' meeting. It was held inside a walled temple. There, however, the screams of little children combined with the talk of the women created a great disturbance. In the old days of the Swadeshi agitation no special effort had been made to enlist the active support of women. In the present movement, however, on account of the introduction of the spinning wheel a greater responsibility had naturally been cast on them. Nor were they lacking in enthusiasm for work but the training required for collective action being wanting, at places they were sadly betraying their incapacity to preserve peace and order.

Finding Mahatmaji alone the next morning (30th August,) and not knowing what exactly Prabhudas had told him about me, I went up to him and explained the thoughts that had been agitating me. Hearing me he replied that I had no reason to think that I was of no special use to him or that public money was being uselessly spent on me. When he would come to think like that, he would not hesitate to tell me about it himself. Then after inquiring about the quantity of food I was taking he said: 'It is not right that you should starve the body.' Then after a pause, he added: 'You need not worry, your health will improve.' Here he repeated his request that I must attend every one of his meetings. When I told him that I could not cope with the crowds and suffered in consequence, and that on the previous day on account of the pushing about among the crowd my body was still aching, he asked me to keep close to

him at all times, and said that with some practice I could learn to avoid the crowds. After this he put into my hand an article in English that he had written for *Young India* and asked me to find out where the language could be improved. For a moment I thought—Must I sit in judgment over his English? But I soon understood that he wanted to test me. Yet I had to obey his order, and so with extreme diffidence I suggested that in two places I had my doubts. He then read the two passages over again, and made an alteration in one of the two, expressing the opinion that I was right in my examination there, while as regards the other passage he explained to me why no alteration was necessary.

At 4 P. M. on that day, Mahatmaji left Sylhet for Chittagong. Before that, at 2 O'Clock he received the pupils of the National School of Sylhet and from whom he got all necessary information about the school. He specially desired to know if all the pupils did spinning, and he put a number of questions to the teacher in charge of spinning. That gentleman however, was unable to give satisfactory answers, as he had never learnt how to examine spinning wheels, nor had he any idea of the merits or defects of even his own wheel. With a shake of his head, Mahatmaji told the teacher that that kind of teaching would not do at all. Noticing also that several boys had put on white Khaddar caps, technically known as Gandhi caps, he asked them why they had done so. He told them that the climate of Bengal was such that the wearing of head-dress was not at all necessary. He made the boys understand that, if they must qualify for Swaraj, blind imitation would not do, but in all matters they must learn to judge and act independently

CHAPTER XV

CHITTAGONG

Leaving Sylhet at 4 P M on the 30th August, and travelling for a whole night and a whole day, Mahatmaji reached Chittagong a little before sunset on the 31st On the way, at the three stations of Comilla, Laksam, and Feni, he received grand ovations At that time Khaddar was not at all in evidence anywhere in Bengal The people were still under the obsession that Swadeshi consisted merely in wearing Indian mill-made cloth Mahatmaji had expected great things of Bengal, but he saw that the enthusiasm that was visible everywhere in that province was not fruitful, and he was deeply pained at heart to find that the one work which alone could conduce to the welfare of the province, and contribute to the success of his movement was still left unattended to

It will be remembered that Mahatmaji, towards the end of his address at Sylhet, had suggested a doubt whether his body could survive the country's failure to respond to his call for the comparatively small measure of sacrifice that he thought was needed for the attainment of Swaraj This led to a discussion among his followers in the train, and a deep gloom fell on the hearts of us all It was remembered that he had hinted at the same thing once or twice before So it became necessary for us to understand what exactly was in his mind Accordingly Seth Jamnalal Bajaj asked him in the train if he really contemplated suicide in case Swaraj was not obtained in the course of the year

Mahatmaji said that he contemplated no such voluntary act. But considering that he was using his body for the purpose of his work beyond its capacities, and considering also that his whole spirit was concentrated on that work, he was afraid that his body might collapse under the terrible shock of a failure

At the Laksam station a large body of Mussalmans came to welcome Mahatmaji They were wearing foreign caps Pained at heart at the sight, Maulana Mahomed Ali exhorted them to surrender the caps so that they might be despatched to Smyrna for the use of the sufferers there His call was obeyed, and a respectable pile of such caps was made In Assam owing to the comparatively small number of Mussalmans, foreign caps were not so much in evidence as here in Eastern Bengal In Assam, however, the Marwaris would come for Mahatmaji's *Darshan* with foreign turbans, and the volunteers would take advantage of the occasion to collect these for the coming bonfire I had seen many of these Marwaris surrendering their turbans not willingly, but either out of courtesy, or from a sense of shame At the Tinsukia station in Assam, some Marwaris, who had handed over their turbans to the volunteers, finding that the volunteers had gone out of sight, went up to Mahatmaji and asked for their return The turbans were immediately ordered to be returned The reader will be able to see for himself when he will come to read the account of the Bombay riots * in a later chapter what dire consequences followed from this wanton seizing of caps and turbans

On the way from Sylhet to Chittagong, the enthusiasm

* Nov 17-18, 1921

and excitement among the people was almost unbounded But sad to relate at no place during the journey was there any provision made for food either for Mahatmaji or his party The result was that for full 24 hours we had to go without food Being a Bengali, I was much ashamed to find that the Bengalis with all their capacity for action should have been guilty of this unpardonable neglect of duty When the train reached Feni station at noon, the people led Mahatmaji and Maulana Mahomed Ali to a spot on one side of the station, where an awning had been put up was only about a dozen yards away but the crowd was so great that it took Mahatmaji and Maulana Saheb full five or six minutes to walk the short distance Shortly after they had got down, the train slowly moved away As the sound neither of bell nor whistle was heard, we thought that it was simply being shunted off a little way from the crowd But the train was leaving the station and the speed also was being increased So finding that Mahatmaji and Moulana Saheb were being left behind, three or four of us who were in the train, got up and pulled the communicating chain to have it stopped The train did stop at once, when some Eurasian Railway officials came and questioned us roughly Without wasting words with them, we hurried back to bring up Mahatmaji but we had not gone far when we discovered that with snakelike rapidity he himself was advancing towards us, and a whole crowd was following him As soon as he and Maulana Saheb had got in the train moved on

Thus we reached Chittagong in the evening As Mahatmaji had no food the whole day, and as it was getting to be evening, Prabhudas and myself instead of accompany-

ing the procession, hastened by a short cut to our appointed quarters to get ready his evening meal All the leaders were welcomed and accommodated in the house of Mr J M Sen Gupta Such perfection of arrangement as we noticed here was hardly witnessed by us anywhere else Every detail had been arranged beforehand with careful forethought, and every individual worker had his particular duties assigned to him The detailed programme of the procession from the station had been printed and published before hand We felt at the time that Chittagong, and places round about it, were breathing the very spirit of Swaraj The enthusiasm of the people was then at its height and the capacity for service and sacrifice which they were exhibiting kept pace with their enthusiasm When this enthusiasm and this passion for service and sacrifice, *instead of being temporary*, could be converted into permanent elements of our national character, then there was no power on earth which could keep such a nation under constraint It was with a view to make them permanent, by accustoming the people to think of the country's welfare, and do something for her everyday that the duty of spinning had been declared obligatory on all by Mahatmaji So also if his other teachings be carefully examined, it will be found that their one object is to impart strength and practicality to the national character

From the station, he came to his quarters, and finishing his meal, he immediately prepared to leave for the public meeting Orders under Sec 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code had been issued by the Magistrate against Mr Sen Gupta and fourteen of his co-workers, and the question came up before Mahatmaji whether they should obey the

order, or disobey it, and attend the meeting Mahatmaji's reply was that no one had the right to disobey the law unless he had in the first instance learnt to render implicit obedience to it Therefore he would advise Mr Sen Gupta and his friends to obey that order as a sort of disciplinary measure When about to start, Mahatmaji noticed me from a distance, and called out to me to come along with him. But when I got ready and went out I found that he had already left in the company of Maulana Mahomed Ali So I accompanied Seth Jamnalalji in a second car to the place of meeting Fearing that we had been a little late, I made all haste to get in, but when I was there I saw Mahatmaji standing at the entrance As soon as he saw me, he said to me "go ahead" At the end of the meeting also he called out to me and enjoined me to "go ahead", for as he laughingly said to Maulana Mahomed Ali, "After me, the deluge" Thus Mahatmaji had kept me in mind ever after I had complained to him at Sylhet about the trouble I had experienced at the hands of the crowd

The picture of that monster gathering in the Moslem Hall grounds of Chittagong remains still imprinted on my memory This large open space being insufficient for the purpose, the audience sat in consecutive rows on the side of a little hill beyond During the tour, I had seen crowds equally big, or even bigger, but rarely had I noticed such perfect order and quiet anywhere else The meeting opened with the presentation of addresses One of these was in Hindi in which while describing Chittagong there occurred Sanskritised sentences like the following —"In this autumn evening, in this delightful garden of nature, crowned by hills, garlanded by rivers, and with the sea as her flowing

hair", etc * Seeing this attempt to add Hindi terminations to elaborately Sanskritised Bengali forms, those who were with Mahatmaji fell to laughing, while the two Maulanas, unable to understand one word of it, looked at each other in blank surprise Referring to this matter in his speech, Mahatmaji said, "*Hindustani* must be the common language of Hindus and Mussalmans in India Without unity of language, it would not be possible to lay firmly the foundations of Hindu-Muslim unity But if the Hindus kept on Sanskritising that language by way of appropriating it to themselves or if the Mussalmans, in their turn went on decorating it with Persian forms such unity could not be preserved for long That is why he advocated pure Hindustani In India, Hindus and Mussalmans could not afford to pursue two different paths, if either of them went its own way, without caring for the other, all our efforts would be futile If a Hindu thought that his community being the largest in number, Swaraj would result in Hindu supremacy, he was grievously wrong Similarly also, if a Mussalman thought that his community was the more powerful community, and that Swaraj would lead to the establishment of the supremacy of his community, he would be equally wrong Swaraj must, in truth, be the common possession of every community in India, be it Hindu, Mussalman, Christian, Jew or Parsi Aye, if there be Englishmen who would accept India as their own country, then also they must be accorded equal rights Then after

* इस शारद प्रदोषमें शैल किरिटीनी मीरन्मालिनी
सागर कुन्तला प्रकृतिका रम्यभूमि "—

counselling his hearers to preserve the purity of Hindustani, Mahatmaji concluded with an exposition of the absolute importance of national self-purification and of non-violence, and of the boycott of foreign cloth for the winning of Swaraj

He returned from the meeting at 10 in the night The leading men among the promoters of the railway and steamer strikes, which were still in progress in Eastern Bengal, as a result of the Chandpur labour troubles then came and sat in conference with Mahatmaji, which continued till one O clock in the morning The stir and excitement in Eastern Bengal, which the Government s inhuman treatment of the poor oppressed labourers created at the time, had not yet faded from our memory The non-co-operation movement was then at its height, and its influence pervaded the whole country In the circumstances any measures intended to combat Governmental oppression were regarded by the general public as integral parts of the same movement The ill-treatment of the labourers related itself to the three following matters -*first* the unfair reduction of wages by the tea-planters *secondly*, the Gurkha attack upon them at Chandpur under the orders of the officials and *thirdly*, the refusal by the Steamer Companies to convey the poor coolies stranded at Chandpur free of charge across the mighty Padma, so that they might take train and depart for their homes in Northern India In respect of each of these items, nothing could be done by the people to fight the tea planters, and as against the bureaucracy, save and except Non-co operation, nothing had yet been devised Finding that there were no chances of a successful campaign in these directions, the local

leaders of the Congress had initiated a campaign against the Railway and the Steamer companies These companies suffered indeed, much loss for the time being, but the Government came at last to their rescue, and they soon recovered their strength It was being felt that it was an unequal fight with the companies the strikers were waging, reinforced as the companies had been by the resources of the Bengal Government And so the opinion grew in strength that if the strikers were not accorded by the Provincial Congress authorities similar support to what the companies had been receiving from the officials, it was not difficult to foresee, that they could not hold out for long The local leaders of the Congress had become so inextricably involved in these strikes that they could hardly turn their hands to anything else The terms that were being offered by the companies might lead to a settlement though at the cost of some sacrifice But what was weighing on the mind of the leaders was that the acceptance of those terms meant a confession of defeat on the part of the Congress authorities in Bengal In this predicament the Bengal leaders came to Mahatmaji, asking for approval and support of their actions No pains were spared by them to persuade Mahatmaji to accept the strikes as an integral part of the Non-co-operation movement Mahatmaji fully sympathised with the leaders in the difficult and responsible situation which had thus arisen Nevertheless his regret was that in that part of the country the strikes had led to a set back to the progress of the original movement If the strikes succeeded, would that in any way benefit the country as a whole? Even if the companies expressed regret for their conduct and unconditionally re-admitted all their employees,

and if the Steamer companies refunded the money they had charged for conveying the coolies across the river, how would all that contribute to the attainment of Swaraj Mahatmaji's non-co-operation movement was an open, direct challenge to the Government, but here these strikes had provided an excellent opportunity to the latter to take shelter behind the Railway and the Steamer companies and fight the non-co-operators under cover Further, if the strikers finally decided not to go back to their work, there was the problem of devising means to enable them to earn a livelihood After giving due weight to all sides of the question, Mahatmaji's decision was that if the strike was the result of a genuine sympathy for the oppressed coolies no striker should go back to his old work, as long as Government remained impenitent and as long as the Steamer companies *refused to refund the fares they had taken from* the Assam coolies For in such situation it was the most natural thing for all sympathisers to non-co-operate with the companies, cheerfully submitting to the sacrifices involved For those who after mature consideration decided to live independently, refusing to go back to work under the companies, Mahatmaji would suggest the establishment of a Colony of strikers, and the starting of a spinning and weaving factory for their maintenance Mahatmaji met the strikers at a meeting the next morning He gave them to understand that hitherto he had expressed no definite opinion against these strikes Before he came to Chittagong, he had not been in possession of all the facts It was now that he learned for the first time that the strike had been undertaken by way of protest against the oppression practised upon the coolies at Chandpur, and that it had been

prompted by no selfish ends Never before had he come across people belonging to their class so readily throwing up their means of livelihood as a mark of their sympathy with the sufferings of their oppressed countrymen.' If, therefore, he said, these strikes were the result of genuine sympathy, their object was sacred and no words of praise were too high for them It behoved them therefore to keep to their vow as long as the wrongs on the poor coolies remained unredressed But the lustre of their sacrifice would grow dim, if instead of standing on their own feet they leaned on the Congress for pecuniary support His advice to them, therefore, was that they must learn to use their own hands and feet to get for themselves an independent living, instead of being dependent on the Congress for pecuniary help In that connection he pointed out to them that if they took to spinning and weaving they would have an easy means of earning their livelihood Then he enjoined upon them all to accord their forgiveness to those among their associates who had gone back to their old work He pointed out to them that his previous experiences about strikes were not inconsiderable In South Africa, for instance, under his leadership, some forty thousand labourers had gone on strike, some ten thousand of whom had to undergo imprisonment while a considerable number had to undergo flogging Nevertheless, in the end they had won, and the secret of that winning was that they had stuck to Truth and Justice as their motto, and had remained uniformly nonviolent So his last earnest advice to the strikers would be, he

* The question of sympathetic strikes is discussed at considerable length by Mahatmaji in an article in *Young India* The full text of it is given in the Appendix to this volume

concluded by saying, that they should remain non-violent and preserve the peace

Early at dawn on the 1st September, the boys of the local Saraswat Ashram came to Mahatmaji, singing sweet songs, led by Mr Nripendra Chandra Banerji, formerly Vice-Principal of the local Government College, who had turned a non co-operator They presented an address to Mahatmaji, and made him a gift of a spinning-wheel manufactured at their own Ashram Then the whole day's work was taken up with meetings in succession First, there was the strikers meeting next a Ladies meeting then a Khilafat meeting, then a meeting of the Chittagong Merchants' Association and so on Mahatmaji was also shown round the city It was an altogether new side of Mahatmaji's character that presented itself before my eyes here at Chittagong Hitherto for the most part I had seen him sitting patiently hour after hour wholly intent upon work But now it was a revelation to me that he could finish meeting after meeting and get through all his engagements so quickly This astonishing promptness of despatch struck me as something extraordinary Thus did he spend the whole day at Chittagong and his work done, he left for Barisal by the evening train

CHAPTER XVI

BARISAL

Passing the whole of the night in the train, Mahatmaji arrived at the Chandpur Ghat station on the morning of the 2nd September. Chandpur is the terminus of a branch line on the Assam Bengal Railway, and the journey from there to Barisal had to be made by steamer. Chandpur is a town standing on a bank of the broad Meghna. In previous June, the coolies of the Assam tea-gardens, starting on their exodus homewards, had found themselves stranded here, and here at the station itself they were the victims of a bayonet charge at the hands of the armed Gurkha police under official orders. Mahatmaji was shown the very spot where on that dreadfully dark night the cruel attack on the unsuspecting Assam coolies was launched. As there were some three or four hours still remaining for the steamer to start, the leading men of the place took Mahatmaji to a couple of meetings in the town, and also showed him round the local National School. The school had been established at the time of the Partition by the well-known leader of Chandpur, Mr Haradayal Nag, and having been kept up all along through his efforts, had now regained new life under the impulse of the present movement.

Chandpur is my native place, and my father, Mr Radha Madhav Sinha Ray, is a respectable citizen of the place, ever forward in constructive national work. It was the example of his unostentatious labours for the good of his fellowmen, and for the uplift of the country, that had since my boyhood,

acted as a stimulus on me and made me anxious to join the national movement Seeing that there was to be a stay of some three or four hours here, I took Mahatmaji's permission and went to pay my respects to my parents returning with their benedictions

The way from Chandpur to Barisal was a delight to the eyes. On all sides rivers abounded and wherever we cast a glance nothing but water was to be seen while beyond, the fertile earth, adorned with fruits and vegetation, soothed the vision by her green loveliness Methinks nowhere else in all India such a wonderfully harmonious association of land and water could be seen All forgot their fatigue under the touch of the pure gentle breeze of the river

The steamer reached Barisal at five in the evening The landing place was guarded by a formidable array of police force carrying long *lathis* in their hands, and casting stern looks on all and sundry Outside the police belt the public of Barisal took their stand They received Mahatmaji and the other leaders, and took them round in a procession When the procession had left and the crowd dispersed, Jamnadas, Prabhudas, Hirowe, Mr Hayat (Secretary to Maulana Mahomed Ali), Parasuram (Pagal) and myself proceeded by another route to our appointed quarters

Just as at Chittagong, the question of the Railway strike had become the chiefest problem there, monopolising all time, energy, resources and attention of the public so also at Barisal there were some outstanding problems of equal improtance awaiting settlement and solution Ever since the Swadeshi era, Barisal had become almost a place of pilgrimage for all Bengal. The present movement also had greatly stirred the people here The Chandpur steamer

strike in connection with the Assam coolies had also had its repercussion here, and it was still being vigorously kept up at Barisal While at Sylhet a letter from Barisal had reached Mahatmaji requesting him to respect the strike by refusing to use the Company's steamer service On receipt of the letter Mahatmaji had enquired of me if I knew anything of the state of the strike, and if it was at all possible for him to reach Barisal by any other route

Besides the steamer strike, a number of hartals had been held at Barisal one after another in quick succession Mahatmaji also came to learn that in that connection Government officials and loyalists had been harassed by the people cutting off their supplies As a result, a "District Propaganda Committee had been formed at Barisal to work against Non-co-operation A moslem youth came to see Mahatmaji on behalf of this Committee and began arguing that the Khilafat movement had no basis whatso ever, as the treaty between the Allies and Turkey was in no way prejudicial to Islam As the youth was eager to enter into a controversy Mahatmaji enquired of him if his view had the sanction of any mussalmans divine, or whether it was his personal view that he was putting forward The youth made a reference to the opinion of a famous Maulana of Behar but Mahatmaji replied that that particular Maulana was now a supporter of the Khilafat movement The youth, when he left, craved protection lest the volunteers should handle him roughly Then, at the public meeting itself while Mahatmaji was speaking, two other mussalman gentlemen stood up and complained that they were being harassed in various ways for their want of sympathy with Non-co-operation Besides this several letters had been

received by Mahatmaji from the "District Propaganda Committee" about which the opinion of the general public of Barisal was that it was not a genuine thing, enjoying as it did official protection and support

The high state of organizatian and discipline to which the volunteers of Barisal had attained was something exceptional As Moulana Mahomed Ali said in his speech, Barisal in that respect beat even Chittagong We found the volunteers standing along the roads marking time with their steps like soldiers One of these, having succeeded after many attempts in getting an opportunity to talk to him in private told Mahatmaji that the volunteers had a greater attraction for the methods of violence than for the ways of peace, which Mahatmaji advocated From a single day's stay, it was not possible for us to find out how far this might be true, but the kind of military formation and demeanour of the police at Barisal, at the time of our arrival as well as of our departure, we had seen nowhere else, and the question arose in my mind whether all this might not have been a reply to the general attitude of the local volunteers

An entirely novel kind of problem came up here before Mahatmaji for solution A considerable number of the prostitutes of Barisal had paid in their subscriptions and joined the Congress as members They had contributed also to the Tilak Swaraj Fund They now wanted to know if they were eligible to become office-bearers in the Congress, and in that connection prayed to have an interview with Mahatmaji This proposal made him thoughtful After a while he spoke as follows —"Barisal is a small town, the number of prostitutes here must be small If they be some eight or ten, we may appoint an hour for them " But when

the messenger from the prostitutes gave Mahatmaji to understand that there were no less than three hundred and fifty prostitutes all told, he showed some excitement and cried out—"Shame, Shame on Barisal " Then after giving the matter some thought he appointed a particular hour for the interview

After these various matters had been disposed of, Mahatmaji went and spoke at the public meeting, He first dwelt on the imperative need for the carrying out of the threefold programme of non-violence, Hindu-Muslim unity and Swadeshi in the interests of Swaraj Speaking of non-violence, he said that even if the Government lost heir heads and arrested the Ali Brothers, still we must not lose our patience and behave like the Moplahs of Malabar Speaking of Hindu-Muslim unity, he said that there was no hope for Swaraj as long as the two communities stood arrayed against each other, and kept on fighting with each other The unity he was demanding was the unity that subsists between brother and brother Their union must not be a mere external show, but heart must respond to heart Otherwise, if the heart bred poison, while outwardly there was a display of amity, then that amity would not last beyond a day or two. With the cry of union in our lips, Hindus and Muslims may shout for Swaraj, but it would be like acting a play, and the kind of Swaraj it would lead to would be like stage-Swaraj, and not the real thing. Speaking of Swadeshi, he said that to him it was the bitterest mortification that he should have to come to Bengal, the home of Swadeshi, to preach the Swadeshi cult. But there was a real difference, said he, between the present Swadeshi movement and the Swadeshi of the Bengal Partition days.

Then Bengal taking the Swadeshi vow had to depend on the Bombay and Ahmedabad mills for the supply of her own needs, that is why that the older movement had not succeeded Now, however, they were being required to spin their own yarn and weave their own cloth, without which the present agitation, so far as Bengal was concerned, was also bound to fail The Bengali's now, continued Mahatmaji, must aspire to be hardy, even like the sturdy coolie or labourer For they had degenerated into a pleasure-loving people They had lost their capacity for enduring physical hardships They even dreaded to have to wear course cloth And so it would be extremely difficult for Bengalis to win Swaraj, it they failed to shed these weaknesses—such was his firm conviction said Mahatmaji

Having thus discussed the three fundamental conditions of Swaraj, he proceeded to answer some of the questions put to him by the "District Propaganda Committee" These questions had been printed and forwarded to him, but the letters were all unsigned, and he did not know who the organisers of the Committee were, or where they could be found Mahatmaji had expressed an opinion against the Railway and Steamer strikes of Eastern Bengal, but he had not taken steps to prevent the misuse of Congress money in continuing the strikes That was the first charge levelled against him His reply was as follows —He could never support a strike if its object was selfish, or if it was meant to be a protest against the imprisonment of a leader But if it became necessary to organise a strike in the interests of Swaraj or to further this movement of non-co-operation, then certainly he would support such a strike It was his belief that the present strike in Eastern Bengal had done

harm to the non-co-operation movement, and that was why he disapproved of it But he had said nothing against the employment of strikes as a political weapon

The second question of the Propaganda Committee related to the conduct of the students among the non-co operators of Barisal The charge against them was that they had wholly got out of control and were given to abusing and intimidating other students for their refusal to boycott their schools and colleges The committee would like to know if Mahatmaji had thought of any measures to make them amenable to control and to help them in earning their livelihood in the future To this question he made the following *reply* --If any non-co-operator wantonly indulged in insult or intimidation of others, then he was unworthy of that name, he had yet to learn the very A B C. of non-co-operation For the foundations of non-co-operation were laid in the desire to win Freedom by all peaceful means From such a young man the movement could gain nothing His advice to him therefore would be that he must go back to his school or college, and resume his studies to quality for slavery, for it was such training alone that he was fitted to receive As to how non-co-operating young men were to support themselves, he said that he did not arrogate to himself the powers of providence, and that it was not within his competence to make provision for everything He held that when a boy had attained the age of sixteen even his parents must be absolved from the duty of supporting the boy Even in the case of his own sons, he felt he had no duty to maintain them as they were past sixteen From that age upwards, a boy must learn to be self-dependent No one should be absolved

from earning his own livelihood by the independent exercise of his own capacities and his own intelligence If they had not the power to stand on their own feet how could they hope to win Swaraj, or to retain it when it was won? He took for an illustration the case of a seed endowed with vital power which even when cast on rocky soil would germinate and sprout up He therefore felt convinced that those who had left their school or college with a real understanding of what this movement stood for, namely, to earn their freedom, would know how to devise means of earning their livelihood without becoming a dependant on Government For the present he held that on those youngmen who had adopted non-co-operation with the definite object of winning Swaraj or Freedom, there lay the paramount duty of devoting some eight or nine hours every day to spinning and weaving, these being in his opinion the most important instruments at their disposal for the attainment of such Swaraj That would also enble them to earn their livelihood, and he believed in his heart of hearts that their object being unselfish, and their work being pure God himself would bless their efforts

Then, after answering some two or three further questions all relating to the recent hartals at Barisal, he took up the Committee's question on Swadeshi The question was fairly long The cotton-mill owners of Bombay might have contributed handsomely to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, but were they not clearly prompted by the hope to reap a rich harvest if the movement in favour of the boycott of foreign cloth gained the upper-hand? Secondly, Mahatmaji might be preaching a boycott of foreign cloth but the question was whether in India there was suffi-

cient provision to meet the demand for cloth for the whole of India Lastly, assuming that the boycott proved a success under the impulse of the Swadeshi idea, and the destruction of India's foreign trade ensued, was it not worth Mahatmaji's consideration to envisage the evil results that were bound to follow?

Mahatmaji replied that the insinuation against the Bombay mill-owners contained in the first part of the question was unfounded, and wholly unfair Their contribution to the Tilak Swaraj Fund did not amount to much, nor could they hope to achieve any selfish ends under cover of this movement For the call upon the people of each province was that they must manufacture their own cloth Further if it was to be real Swadeshi, then Barisal must produce its own cloth, without indenting on Bombay for the same It was to him a matter of profound regret that in Barisal, with its population of twenty thousand souls, a couple of hundred spinning wheels only were at work He expressed the hope that Barisal should soon have a minimum of four thousand spinning-wheels and a thousand looms actually at work so that Barisal might not have to depend on Bombay or Ahmedabad for its supply of cloth

Referring to the second and third parts of the question, Mahatmaji said it hurt him to the quick to have such questions put, for he honestly believed that for no other purpose but that of concealing the truth all this web of words had been woven He was not opposed to foreign trade as such Boycott of foreign cloth did not mean boycott of all foreign trade India would certainly, said he, import what she required for her growth, and export what she did not need There was no bar to our importing such

things as glassware and machinery from foreign countries, but to import cloth from abroad was as absurd as to think of importing from abroad the oxygen for our body Then warming up to the subject, he exclaimed —"Who was it that supplied India her clothing a century and a half ago, before the advent of British rule? If India provided her own clothing in those days, who is there to prevent her from doing the same thing now? Must we begin sending our corn abroad to be ground into meal and manufactured into biscuits? When this people would feel inclined to take to this course, then we must take it for granted that it is rapidly advancing along the road to ruin The same law applies in the matter of clothing Cotton is produced in our country, but we send it abroad to be manufactured into cloth We are rapidly losing the virtues of industry, patience and manhood, and so we have come to regard spinning and weaving as work entailing hardship And we blind ourselves to the daily growing degradation of our country which has followed as a natural consequence If it so happened in course of time that our women began to grudge the labour of cooking, and preferred to have their food cooked in hotels, then the conclusion would be inevitable that the moral foundations of India's life were giving way, and India's women were in danger of losing their time-honoured virtue of chastity God has endowed us with hands and feet not that we might remain idle, but that we may work If then people ceased to use them, then rest assured that they should be visited with loss of character as a proper retribution I have said on many an occasion before, and I will repeat it here, that the work of cultivation and the work of spinning and weaving, are as the

two lungs of our national body If, therefore, equal attention be not paid to them, or if either of them is neglected and gets atrophied for want of use, then this body politic cannot hope to live for long "

The last question was a sort of a personal question which Mahatmaji was called upon to answer He was first informed that those very persons who shouted his name and were given to crying 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi '—it was those very persons who had engineered these hartals time after time causing endless suffering to the general public This led up to the question,—"Was it agreeable for Mahatmaji to hear these shouts and cries?" To this Mahatmaji made the following feeling reply He said,— "When I hear cries of "Victory to Mahatma Gandhi", every sound of the phrase pierces my heart like an arrow If only I thought for a moment that these shouts could win Swaraj for you, I could reconcile myself to my misery But when I find that peoples' time and energy was spent in mere useless shouting, while at the same time real work was given the go-by, how I wish that they should, instead of shouting my name, prepare and light up a funeral pyre for me and that I might leap into it, and once for all extinguish the fire that is scorching up my heart!

It was late in the evening when he returned home from the meeting On the first floor was Mahatmaji's room, but one must pass through our room to enter it About 10 P M Mahatmaji went and sat for a while on the terrace in front of his room Then I saw some women enter our room and pass on to the terrace They were soon followed by batch after batch of women The volunteers who had conducted them to the terrace waited there to hear the

conversation Mahatmaji did not like this at all, and so with an emphatic, "Go, Go, all of you must go," made them all leave the place Hirowe and I who were in Mahatmaji's room also came away Going downstairs, we heard from Seth Jamnalalji that the women were the prostitutes of Barisal who had come to meet Mahatmaji by appointment They had a couple of hours' interview with Mahatmaji before they came downstairs, when, advancing a little, some of them offered their salutations to Jamnalalji From their looks I could guess that they had been overpowered by a feeling of reverence for Mahatmaji Mahatmaji gave an account of this interview with the "Fallen Sisters of Barisal", in an article in *Young India* Calculating on the basis of population as applicable to Barisal, he estimated that there must be ten and a half lakhs of these sisters in all India If they left off their sin, and dedicated themselves to the country's good and by way of livelihood took to spinning and weaving, it would mean a daily income of one million and fifty thousand rupees for India calculating at the rate of a rupee one per head per diem But who is there that would take up the work of their reclamation? Addressing those whom he saw were keen on this particular work in Barisal, he gave the warning that this work must not be undertaken in a spirit of over-confidence, nor by any except such as were advanced in age and had acquired the necessary experience and grit of character

Mahatmaji left Barisal on the evening of the 3rd September On the very day of arrival in Barisal he had paid a visit to Babu Aswin Kumar Dutt, and now on the day of his departure he paid a second visit Here at Barisal he was very pleased to note the excellent arrangements for

spinning and weaving at the National school and weaving Institute Besides, he had a number of special meetings to attend At the Merchants' meeting, the Ladies' meeting, the Strikers' meeting, the Congress Workers' meeting, the Khilafat meeting, and the Volunteers' meeting, he advised the members on their work His advice to the Barisal strikers was identical with that he had given to the strikers at Chittagong To the Congress Workers his advice was that they must consider the production and distribution of Khaddar as their chief duty, and he also told them that it was his heart s prayer that they might succeed in forming a new " East India Company on the basis of *khaddar* business He complimented the volunteers on the consummate ability they had shown n maintaining order and discipline, but he regretted that he had heard that some of them were not advocates of non-violence He pointed out to them that if they but swerved a hair s breadth from the path of peace, the whole movement would collapse in no time After spending the whole day in this strenuous fashion, he left Barisal for Khulna by the evening steamer There was an immense throng on board the steamer, and all were eager to see Mahatmaji He and Maulana Mahomed Ali, then, came down from the upper deck, and for a while freely moved about among the people The whole of the night was passed in the steamer Next morning we reached Khulna where a large crowd had assembled outside the station to pay their respects to Mahatmaji We were then hurrying back to Calcutta, and we took the train to Calcutta immediately after At the *Dum Dum* station we met Mrs Urmila Devi, Mr Jitendralal Banerji and others, who had come to receive and escort Mahatmaji, Maulana and Begum

Mahomed Ali, and Maulana Azad Sobhani to Calcutta by motor The rest of us reached Sealdah by train at about 11 (on the 4th September) In Calcutta we were this time the guests of Mr C R Das

CHAPTER XVII

CALCUTTA—I

Leaving Calcutta on the 17th August, and finishing his Assam and Eastern Bengal tour, Mahatmaji and party returned to Calcutta on the 4th September. We had all been feeling more or less the strain of these sixteen days' fatiguing journey, attended as it was with loss of sleep, and irregularities in food, etc. No praise could be too high for the admirable spirit in which Begum Mahomed Ali had borne all these discomforts on the way. She had to sit behind the *purdah* at all time, while at the time of appearing in public, she had to cover herself from head to foot with a veil of course *khaddar*. Only those who have experienced the heats of August in Eastern Bengal could realise her sufferings in those circumstances. On the top of all this it was not even her privilege to enjoy the small restricted freedom enjoyed by men to move about freely in train or steamer. But, in spite of it all, she was behind none in cheerfully submitting to all these discomforts. Maulana Azad Sobhani's countenance had turned almost dark under the influence of the Bengal climate. He was deeply learned in Muslim lore, and loved to spend all his time in religious study and meditation. He had hardly time to look after his luggage; there was not even a lock and key to his trunk. As Maulana Mahomed Ali humorously remarked, he had not the faintest notion of what things get into his trunk, or what things went out of it. His graceful form had suffered

from the dust and sand and smoke on the way The calm face and imposing frame of Seth Jamnalalji had also become worn and thin At Calcutta our party dispersed Jamanlalji went with his party to his shop at Barabazar The Maulanas Mahomed Ali and Azad Sobhani, though they were the guests of Desabadhu Das, had to spend most of their time among their co-religionists, enlisting their support for the Non-co-operation movement, and collecting subscriptions for the Khilafat Fund, while Jamnadas and Prabhudas, tired of eating Bengali dishes all these days, took to visiting the homes of their Guzarati friends and relations in Calcutta

Arriving in Calcutta, I learnt that we were to proceed to Madras after a week's rest Seth Jamnalalji and his associates would not accompany Mahatmaji to Madras, but would stay in Calcutta and work to get the cloth dealers boycott foreign cloth However, for one reason or another, it was not possible to keep to our time-table and our stay in Calcutta was prolonged by two days This no doubt gave the party good rest, but what rest could Mahatmaji have? The whole city and suburbs were astir ove his visit Distinguished leaders from different parts of the country had begun to arrive to attend the meeting of the Working Committee that had already been announced to be held in Calcutta It was then the beginning of September Mahatmaji had in the course of his speeches at one or two places declared his belief that in case the boycott of foreign cloth was completed by the end of that month, Swaraj could be established in October The people had too much respect for and faith in him to disbelieve that declaration, but at the same time they could hardly see how the anticipation

could possibly be fulfilled This prolonged spell of India's political subjection, this powerful British Government, could all this vanish in one single night like the baseless fabric of a dream? Not caring to remember the conditions that Mahatmaji had laid down for the winning of Swaraj, people went about repeating the cry that Swaraj was about to come, for Mahatmaji had promised it Not for once thinking about their own responsibility in the matter they were spending their days in breathless expectation Among the leaders that had come to attend the Working Committee meeting was Lala Lajpat Rai, the Lion of the Punjab He arrived when Mahatmaji was engaged in writing something in his room behind closed doors Lalaji was waiting in the verandah in front of Mahatmaji's room, and conversing with some of the other leaders His face was serious, and his naturally small eyes seemed as though they had become smaller still under the weight of heavy thought On his lips, too, was the anxious question--"What next? What next? What does Mahatmaji propose to do next?"

During his stay of nine days at Calcutta from the 4th September (morning) to the 13th September (morning), Mahatmaji had no respite from incessant consultation and discussion, except only on the 5th and the 12th, which being Mondays were days of silence for him But even on those two days he was busy writing his articles for *Young India* and *Navajivan*, and so he had no real rest Long sittings of the Working Committee took place behind closed doors in Mahatmaji's room on the four days, the 6th, the 7th, 8th and 11th. He had, besides, to attend almost daily meetings in different parts of the city. It is specially

worthy of notice that on the evenings of both the 8th and the 11th, as many as five meetings were held simultaneously in five different parts of the city, and that Mahatmaji had to address every one of these five meetings It was so late as nine or ten in the night before he could address the last of them An Anglo-Indian paper of Calcutta could not help expressing its astonishment that thousands and thousands of people could thus sit patiently waiting hour after hour in expectation of Mahatmaji's arrival One day the drivers of bullock carts held a meeting of their own at Mirzapur Park, and then formally made a present to Mahatmaji of ten thousand rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund Again the Oriya coolies of Bara Bazar, at meeting after meeting of their own took the Swadeshi vow, and promised not to handle the bales of foreign cloth imported by the Marwari merchants of Bara Bazar Every meeting had now for its prime object the propagation of Swadeshi and the boycott of foreign cloth

Taking fright at all this agitation against foreign cloth, the Marwari merchants of Bara Bazar called a meeting of their Association, and by way of placating public feeling made an announcement that they had made up their mind not to import foreign cloth up till the end of December But they did not succeed in attracting the sympathies of the public to them, nor was Mahatmaji himself pleased when he heard of this opportunist declaration Then the foreign piece-goods dealers of Colootola invited Mahatmaji to a meeting of their own, and sought his advice in the difficult situation they were placed They declared that they were not wanting in sympathy and enthusiasm, but there were so many obstacles in the way which made it difficult to carry

out the boycott effectively. Mahatmaji's advice to them was threefold Firstly, they might after making the necessary announcement to that effect, dispose of all their existing stock of foreign cloth Or secondly, they might suspend their sale till Swaraj was attained Or, thirdly, if that was at all practicable, the goods might be returned to the wholesale dealers But in no case should there be the slightest attempt made to cheat the wholesalers by the adoption of questionable tactics

In the meanwhile, a few days before Mahatmaji's arrival here, picketting the foreign cloth shops with the help of volunteers had commenced in right earnest That distinguished Mussalman leader, scholar author and orator, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was now leading this movement of picketting I saw the Maulana Sahib almost every day coming to Mahatmaji with long strides, tucking up his sleeves to render an account to him of the day's work After Mahatmaji's return to Calcutta some of the picketting volunteers were arrested at Bara Bazar, but the enthusiasm for picketting instead of waning began to grow higher and higher The Marwari traders now thought of persuading Mahatmaji to order that picketting should stop They came to him and declared that if the picketting continued they could no longer sympathise with his movement Again, if their customers wanted foreign cloth, how could they help it? They were bound to meet the demands of their customers, nor was foreign cloth poison that it could not be supplied to a customer

After hearing all their arguments Mahatmaji said that if he had been here in Calcutta when picketting had commenced, he would have tried to come to an understanding

with the dealers, and have the picketting postponed for a while But now that it had begun, he saw no reasons to advise stopping it, so long, of course, as no violence was attempted by the picketters To the best of his knowledge, the volunteers had behaved admirably so far, and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj would see to it that their future behaviour was equally blameless Mahatmaji further told the foreign cloth dealers that they were mistaken if they thought that trade and commerce should have nothing to do with Indian political movement For they must be aware that the foundations of the politics of the English people were laid in their commerce, and that the national political life of England was closely intertwined with the protection and development of that commerce The view that it was the business of sellers to provide for the particular demands of their customers might be good enough for the West, but it could not hold good in the case of India Were not the Marwari community prepared even to sacrifice their very lives for the protection of the cow ? If so, and assuming customers demanded beef, were they prepared to meet their demand ? Again, if their customers wanted to buy wine, would they set up as wine-merchants ? The fourdations of Hindu religion were laid n renunciation and self control as principles of daily action Therefore, if, as Hindus, they wanted to carry on their trade without prejudice to their religion, they should certainly discriminate between what was good and what was evil in trade In reply to their contention that foreign cloth was no poison that it should be a sin to supply it to a customer, Mahatmaji declared that it was undoubtedly true that they honestly held that view, for they were used to sell foreign cloth for an unconscion-

ably long time But he would ask them to probe the matter a little deeply They would then find that ordinary poisons acted only on the physical body and at the worst, would kill it—a contingency which, comparatively speaking, could be contemplated with equanimity But the degration of the soul of a whole people, which the use of foreign cloth by Indians involved, was too horrible to contemplate Firstly, the use of imported cloth had cut off one prime source of income to our people, and had brought poverty in its train to the masses Next, Mahatmaji asked them if they had taken into account another terrible consequence flowing from it How many of them had the remotest inkling that, deprived of the means of eking out their living by spinning, many of the poorer women of our country had taken to selling their virtues to secure a living Lastly, said Mahatmaji they must not forget that it was this cloth-industry alone that had enabled England to keep India in subjection Therefore, if the Marwari community should carefully look below the surface, and realise the significance of all that he had said, it would not be difficult for them to understand why it was that he regarded it as sin to deal in foreign cloth Then after paying a tribute to them for their commercial intelligence, their practical genius, and their fear of Adharma (sinful acts) Mahatmaji exhorted them to set about devising means to supply the nation's need by preparing cloth out of Indian handspun yarn , for he held that, if Marwar so chose, she alone could provide the whole of India with Khaddar

Although Mahatmaji's time and energy were now almost wholly concentrated on the boycott propaganda, in view of his resolve to put a stop to the import of foreign cloth

into India by the end of September, yet he had to find time to attend to some of the local problems of Bengal The one question which for the time as we have already hinted, overshadowed all others in Bengal, was that of the Railway and Steamer strikes of Eastern Bengal He had already made a declaration of his views in regard to the strikes both at Chittagong and at Barisal But arriving in Calcutta he found that discussion and agitation of the question was still as active as ever, and so he was called upon to make a formal pronouncement In a statement to the Press over his signature, he now publicly gave out that, since it was abundantly clear that the strikers were prompted by no selfish considerations but solely by sympathy for the sufferings of the exiled coolies, no settlement of the strike was possible so long as the parties concerned failed to apologise for their illtreatment of the coolies, and so long also as they failed to refund the fares so unjustly levied from them In the same connection he also expressed the opinion that, in view of the fact that the Provincial Congress Committee had so far taken upon themselves the responsibility of financing the strike, it was their clear duty to provide the necessary funds, whether for repatriation, or by way of provision, to enable the strikers to start some spinning and weaving business With the issue of this statement, the strike agitation was laid to rest. About this time, however, the news of the forced conversions of Hindus by the Moplah rebels of Malabar began to arrive, and there was danger of the recrudescence of Hindu Moslem tension in different parts of the country Mahatmaji had repeatedly laid emphasis on the fact that, unless there was amity established between Hindus and Moslems in India, Swaraj was an impossibility,

and now the whole group of Anglo-Indian papers in Calcutta started giving warning to the Hindus, that directly the British rule ceased in India, Hindus would be the victims of a similar course of oppression at the hands of the Mussalmans to what had happened in Malabar Lest the efforts of these European papers should produce an unsettling effect on the minds of Hindus, Maulana Mahomed Ali in his Mirzapur Park speech showed by quoting from the Koran that forced conversions were not countenanced by Islam

The old revolutionary party of Bengal noting all the stir and ferment about them began to fancy that the times were propitious for the realisation of their dreams They could hardly get themselves to understand the significance of Mahatmaji's methods and action They were wholly unable to reason out how non-violent methods could at all lead to India's emancipation Some even went so far as to imagine that all this talk of non-violence was a mere political manoeuvre on the part of Mahatmaji, and that when the hour had struck Mahatmaji would come out in his true colours, and play the part of a grim revolutionary Therefore, thought they, it was time to tell Mahatmaji that the hour for action had arrived, and that it was not right to delay action any longer About this time one day Deshabandu Das came and told Mahatmaji with a laugh—"The Violent School?—the violent school exists only in name" But Mahatmaji was not feeling quite easy about Bengal He had had great hopes of Bengal but now he was giving vent to his feeling of mortification that, partly because of the excitement caused by the strikes, and partly because of the lack of faith among the workers in the methods of non-violence, Bengal instead of keeping pace with the rest of India was

falling behind in the race It was increasingly becoming clear to him that Bengal of all the provinces had not accepted with the necessary amount of wholeheartedness the remedies he had prescribed to get rid of the root causes of that weakness and servility which lay at the root of Indian national character

The result of all this was that while the work of *khaddar* production and Charkha propaganda were proceeding apace in the other provinces, progress in Bengal was, comparatively speaking, little or nothing The strike had swallowed up the collections of the Tilak Swaraj Fund amounting to about six lakhs, whereas in the other provinces the collections were being spent primarily on the furtherance of spinning and weaving But although this was so, Bengali intelligence was not lying idle It was, however, confined to devising newer and newer types of Charkha Thus, almost in each district visited by Mahatmaji, a special variety of Charkha had been shown to him In Calcutta also, he was one day taken to a Charkha Exhibition at the National College, where various types of spinning wheels were exhibited But nobody could explain to Mahatmaji what were the special merits or the defects of each one of these varieties of wheels Nor were there anything to tell what real progress had been achieved by Bengal in the matter of yarn production Mahatmaji, therefore, now wrote an article under the title of "Wanted Experts", which he sent for publication in *Young India* In that article he first explained the virtues of the spinning wheel in their special aspects, political, economic, moral and spiritual and then from a practical point of view emphasised the urgent need that existed of each Province in India having its own body of experts to test the quality

of every charkha used These experts must not be mere experts, so called, but must have qualified themselves by hard, practical apprenticeship in spinning For this purpose the future expert must begin his apprenticeship by spending eight hours every day on spinning He affirmed his conviction that when once Bengal had thoroughly realised the greatness of the Charkha, she would cling to it with such passionate devotion that she would leave behind in the race every other Province For it is an indisputable historical fact, said Mahatmaji, that in the past Bengal was the most skilled in the artistic manufacture of cloth But now she must build up her spinning anew One day Deshabandhu Das reported a story to Mahatmaji of an old woman whom he had met who firmly believed that if once again a Charkha was manufactured, the police would come and break it in pieces, and apply fire to it As Mr Das said, the poor woman had still retained a recollection of the high-handed methods which had been employed to destroy the old cloth industry of Bengal Hearing this, Mahatmaji said with a laugh that he would be mightily pleased if the Government once more thought of destroying the Charkha, as that would leave an indelible impress upon the people's mind as to the real value of the Charkha

CHAPTER XVIII

CALCUTTA—II

Mahatmaji's present visit to Bengal was giving him an insight into the varied forces that stood in the way of Bengal's progress in this movement He had forfeited the sympathies of many practising lawyers by expressing the opinion that no practising lawyer could become an office-bearer on the Congress Executive The late Mr Motilal Ghosh, editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, summoned him from his sick bed, and specially requested him to see that the lawyers were not kept out of the movement So also only a few days before Mahatmaji's return to Calcutta from his Assam tour, the Poet, Rabindranath Tagore, had read a paper at the Calcutta University Institute inveighing against the spinning wheel on the plea that it contained within it the seeds of India's degeneration And when such a world-famed man as the great poet came out into the open, the enemies of the Non-co operation movement came forward to attack it with added energy Mr C F Andrews, friend and sometime co-worker of Mahatmaji in South Africa, the very soul of pity and love, was associated with the Poet's work at the Bolpur Ashram He looked upon Mahatmaji with as much love and reverence as upon the Poet He himself was working hard for the Non-co-opera tion movement He was now much exercised to find the Poet ranged against Mahatmaji, and acting as a mediator, took Mahatmaji to the Poet's Calcutta home on the morning

of the 6th September A private discussion on the subject of Non-co-operation lasting full three hours was held between them, but on Mahatmaji's return we heard that nothing had been gained by the interview The poet had his say first, and then Mahatmaji explained his point of view, and when they parted, they agreed to differ Nobody actually knew the details of the talk but the general public were treated to all sorts of rumours, and even the newspapers began to publish stories of the interview A certain European owned paper proclaimed that Mahatmaji had been beaten in argument by the Poet Another paper gave out that Mahatmaji had confessed to the Poet that he did not really believe it was possible for India to win Swaraj within the space of a twelve month, but that he had made that sort of declaration only as a matter of policy to help on the movement This was the signal of an attack on Mahatmaji in some papers To get at the truth or otherwise of these stories, a representative of the *Servant* newspaper of Calcutta interviewed Mahatmaji He told the interviewer that the demand of the public to know what passed between individuals at a private conference was hardly justifiable Secondly, seeing that these stories were set afloat to belittle him and his movement, he was not prepared on any account to make any self-defence He could safely leave his honour to be defended by the Poet himself Subsequently, on another day, the question was put to him if he had at all told the Poet that he had not believed in the possibility of Swaraj within a year, to which he made the reply that he had said nothing of the sort This reply came to be published in the papers Then on another day, Mr Andrews came to Mahatmaji and showed him a letter written by the

Poet, which was to be sent to the local *Englishman* newspaper for publication. That letter contained an indignant repudiation by the Poet of all the accusations that were being circulated against Mahatmaji. Mr. Andrews' state of mind at the time was, indeed, miserable, and he felt the misery most keenly. He was grieved to find that not only had the Poet declared himself in opposition to the movement, but his own efforts to reconcile them, instead of doing any good had resulted in a campaign of misrepresentation against Mahatmaji, with a view to discredit his movement. In this connection I heard Mahatmaji saying one day, "Poor Andrews is suffering mental torture, being caught up by two opposing currents."

All these days Mahatmaji was so much occupied with outside discussions, meetings, and other work relating to the movement that we of this party could not talk to him, or even hear him talk. Almost every evening he would go out to attend some meeting or other, and during midday he sat in consultation with the Working Committee behind closed doors, while in the morning he took to silence to get through his writing work. At this time if any of us approached him on some special business, he would not open his lips, but would give a very brief answer in writing. Without some previous practice, it was difficult to read his handwriting. Maulana Mahomed Ali could not as a rule make out his handwriting. Coming to him one morning on some business, the Maulana found himself in sore straits. Mahatmaji would be writing his answer in pencil, and the Maulana would go on struggling through the tortuous pencil writing, and would take out his specs, and rubbing his eyes, would stammer out the words. And Mahatmaji would be

looking at the stupendous, heroic figure of the Maulana with a fixed gaze, and as I suspected, he would be thoroughly enjoying the situation On another day, Mr Hayat, the Maulana Sahib's Secretary, coming on an errand to Mahatmaji when he was silent, and not being able to make out his pencil-written answers had to end his business somehow, and coming outside said "Bapu"* is getting more and more atrocious every day" All this while Deshabandhu Das's mansion would be filled with a constant stream of visitors who came to talk to him or to have merely a view of him from a distance The more prominent among these would go upstairs and await his leisure One day, Mrs Urmila Devi, Deshabandu's sister, after waiting for a long time to tell him something, came to us and said, "Mahatmaji is our guest and yet we cannot talk to him even five minutes he is so monopolised by other people at all times" Mr Mahadev Desai had at this time come down from Allahabad Mahatmaji himself had summoned him, but even he could not get the opportunity to speak to Mahatmaji And so I heard him say in terms of loving complaint, "If it comes to this, what need was there to have summoned me all the way from Allahabad"?

In the midst of all this bustle, we had no other business than to be constantly in readiness for his orders One day, Maulana Mahomed Ali called me and said, "Look here, Krishnadas, your Bengali people hate me for nothing Just look at this a Bengali has sent me this letter of abuse" With this he handed me a letter written by somebody from Howrah containing severe abuse of the Maulana I looked

*'Bapu' in Guzarati means father

over the letter and told him that he had no reason to feel sorry, for the writer was not after all his enemy, seeing that he had addressed him as 'My very dear Mr Mahomed Ali' He laughed and said "That is just where the Bengali excels"

When the Maulana was showing me this letter, and complaining of its contents, Jamnadas came in and asked him by way of a joke, "What position would he like to fill when Swaraj was won?" He replied, "I will open a small school, and take to teaching little children' In Maulana Sahib s opinion, the delight of teaching little children was not comparable to that of teaching grown up students Then, he went on expressing some of his views on other aspects of education, and then after a pause made the following statement,—'All this is what my heart yearns after But if Swaraj comes shall I find leisure to gratify my personal tastes? Then there shall be no end of work before us, for we shall have to build up the life of the nation"

At Gauhati I heard the Maulana Sahib say in the presence of many in Mahatmaji s room, that, altough he was taken for a Hindu-hater, it would be found from a careful study of his writings, that he had from the very first been preaching the need for Hindu Moslem unity But he was also convinced that if the Mussalmans remained down and the Hindus continued to be the more powerful partner, the unity could not last long Therefore he felt that there was need for the Mussalmans to be equally strong And the good of India would be truly secured, said he, only when friendship between Hindus and Mussalmans was esta blished on this basis of equality

Going out on business on the morning o the 5th, I found that no tram was running, and that there was a

complete strike of tramway men. Mahatmaji had returned to Calcutta the previous day, and people began to suspect that he might be at the bottom of it all, but as a matter of fact, he knew nothing about it. When having finished my business I returned and told him of the strike, he looked so surprised that I saw that he had not heard of it.

At this time my teacher received a letter from Professor Kripalani in which he asked my teacher's advice under the following circumstances. The Professor had gone home in Hyderabad (Sindh), as his father was laid up with a severe illness. There was no lack of people, the Professor wrote, to nurse his father, but his father would not let him return to his non-co-operation work, as he did not approve of his turning a non-co-operator, and dedicating himself to national work. That was the situation in which he was placed, and the question was what he should do in the circumstances. My teacher forwarded the letter through me to Mahatmaji, and wished to have his opinion * on the question.

* See appendix

In my opinion we
have neither father
nor mother neither
wife nor children
we belong to India
& every old man calls
on us for service
As therefore the
professor's father
has other nurses
he should with-
draw in the
gentlest manner
possible believing
that service of India
includes service
of his father If his
father was without
nursing, service
of him would
have been service
of India. MKG.

Mahatmaji's Opinion referred to in page 156

CHAPTER XIX

MIDNAPORE

On the morning of the 13th September, Mahatmaji left Calcutta for Midnapore According to the programme, after finishing his Assam and Bengal tour, he must leave for Madras By this time detailed reports of the Moplah* outbreak of Malabar began to pour in, and it was felt that there was urgent need for him to repair to the scene, and make an effort to stop the disorders, and restore amity between Hindus and Moslems there For the news came that the Moplah rebels in a mood of frenzy had been practising all sorts of oppression on the Hindus of the place The report of the Congress Committee on the outbreak had already reached Mahatmaji in Calcutta, and he had taken the earliest opportunity of discussing it with Pandit Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Deshabandhu Das and other distinguished leaders Thus there was the most urgent need of his leaving for Madras at once But a stay of a couple of days more in Calcutta was rendered necessary under following circumstances Rumours emanating from distinguished sources of the impending arrest of Maulana Mahomed Ali were coming in The news had arrived that a messenger from Bombay carrying a most important message was to arrive that very day in Calcutta Accordingly Maulana Sahib did not accompany Mahatmaji to Midnapore Maulana Sahib might even postpone his visit to

* Moplahs are a race of Mussalmans inhabiting parts of Malabar

Madras, if he thought it necessary on receipt of the Bombay message In that case, Mahatmaji would not proceed further, but return to Calcutta In the other alternative, Maulana Sahib was to take the evening Madras Mail and join Mahatmaji at Kharagpore In this state of things, we could not be sure whether we were to proceed to Madras from Midnapore, or come back to Calcutta

He took Prabhudas and me with him to Midnapore Jamnadas was left behind in charge of our things, and if it was finally settled that Mahatmaji was to proceed to Madras, Jamnadas was to accompany Maulana Mahomed Ali by the Madras Mail, and join us at Kharagpore

Mahatmaji was being escorted by Deshabandu Das Mr Jitendralal Banerji, Mrs Urmila Devi, and many others Mr Das was to bid good-bye to Mahatmaji at Midnapore and proceed with his co-workers to Bankura and other places In the train Mahatmaji wrote a long letter in Hindi addressed to Seth Jamnalal Bajaj at his Calcutta address which I posted at Kharagpore

At Kharagpore the Khilafat volunteers presented a guard of honour to Mahatmaji They were dressed like soldiers, putting on uniform, caps and boots and standing in military array But with all this show of military dignity, they had forgotten properly to learn the primary duties of volunteers, namely to keep order, and we who stood behind Mahatmaji were in imminent danger of suffocation under the pressure of the crowd Mahatmaji was taken from Kharagpore to Midnapore by a special train. The profuse hospitality, and the sweet words and manners of the Midnapore people gave us an insight into their amiable character and extreme tender-heartedness On the other

hand, it was clear to me that Midnapore people were inferior to the people of Eastern Bengal in their organising capacity At Midnapore I came to feel for the first time that the different districts of Bengal differed from one another in language, in manners and customs much in the same manner as the provinces of India differed among themselves, and then the thought struck me that, if the people of each district would but duly appreciate the superior qualities of character of the people of other districts, and tried to assimilate them in their own character, then there would be a rapid development of our national character

On reaching our quarters at Midnapore, I had no particular work to do except the usual routine ones At the time of his midday meal I found Mahatmaji engaged in talk with Deshabandhu Das on diverse topics In reply to Deshabandhu's query as to how he had arrived at his present convictions, Mahatmaji said that he had not derived them from the study of books He was not much given to reading, in fact, in his whole life he did not think he had read more than two hundred books But there were certain books by which he had been much benefited For instance, Ruskin's *Unto This Last* which he had read for the first time in South Africa had opened out to his vision an altogether new world, and had, in fact, made him an altogether new man Mr Jitendralal Banerji was there at that time Deeply read in English Literature, he was listening to the talk with eager delight As soon as Ruskin's name was mentioned Mr Banerji pointed out that there was nothing in Ruskin's writings so far as he knew which taught non violence and he referred to some of Ruskin's works in that connection He was therefore curious to

know whence Mahatmaji had got that doctrine Mahatmaji without making any definite reply went on saying that owing to his ignorance of Sanskrit, he had been unable to read the *Gita* in the original, yet he had much profited by the study of Sir Edwin Arnold's English version, *The Song Celestial*

As the sun was burning hot at Midnapore that day, I was much exercised to hear that Mahatmaji was to be taken round in procession through the town I had now begun to pay greater attention to his comforts and conveniences and less to the satisfaction of the wishes and demands of the general public So I went and told Mahatmaji of the proposed procession, and he at once exclaimed, "No procession, there should be no procession" But the local leaders began to press him and press him and made it impossible for him to decline their request After the procession, he attended a meeting of ladies, after which he come to the public meeting

The meeting began with the presentation one after another of addresses by the municipality, the public and the local pleaders Some locally made Khaddar clothes were then presented to him At this point a Santal stood up from among the audience, and with the words—"We are poor, ignorant Santals, yet please accept these clothes of ours"—handed over to Mahatmaji a pair of beautiful Khaddar chudders, woven with their own hands I had seen Mahatmaji at several places in Assam and Eastern Bengal accept such Khaddar gifts, but here he rose from his seat, and stretching out his hands received the gifts with a degree of eager satisfaction, which I had not noticed elsewhere In reply to the addresses he addressed the lawyers first and

said that though it was a great pleasure to him to describe himself as an agriculturist, a weaver, and a labourer, he had formerly been a legal practitioner himself in a small way But when he realised that he could not serve his country as a lawyer, he forthwith gave up the profession He believed that the era of the supremacy of lawyers in public life had gone by and that the era of sacrifice and service had arrived. They alone now could hope to attain to the position of guides and leaders, who with undaunted courage and spirit devote themselves whole-heartedly to the work of the country The days of appeals and petitions, and of convening meetings and passing resolutions—these days were gone Therefore, the sympathies of the masses could no longer be won by the application of mere ingenuity, or by the display of eloquence No longer would it be possible to win the hearts of our countrymen except by the exhibition of superior sacrifice, courage and heroism That was why he had expressed the opinion that practising lawyers could not aspire to the position of leadership in the present movement Personally he had no feelings of ill-will against lawyers But having followed the trend of public feeling he had simply given expression to the country's views in the matter He did not wish to keep his lawyer brothers out of the movement, but would merely ask them to give up their position of leadership while serving the country For a whole period of thirty five years they had held the position of leadership, let them now accept the position of lieutenants handing over their leadership into other hands and following their lead In these days he who would enlist himself as a soldier in the ranks of the national army could expect to render real service to the country, not a

soldier to kill others, but to be killed himself while fighting wrong The soldier who would not flinch an inch while fighting, and would rather be killed than kill his adversary, is indeed the greater hero The nation's need now was to have as many such heroes as possible as would learn to stand up for right while injuring none, and if it so be, most cheerfully give up their lives on the scaffold Hence it was that he advised his lawyer friends to keep themselves for a while in the background and enlist as soldiers in the ranks

Then after exhorting his hearers to see that all the promised subscriptions to the Tilak Swaraj Fund of Bengal were soon collected, he concluded by saying that during that visit to Bengal, he had for his special object the preaching of Swadeshi Non violence and Hindu-Muslim Unity He still held that Swaraj would not take long to be established, if only they succeeded in keeping the peace in the country, and in fulfilling the programme of Swadeshi With regard to Hindu-Muslim Unity he wanted to dispel a doubt After the Moplah outbreak, it might be argued that Hindu-Muslim Unity was a dream He was of no such opinion He believed that even after Hindu-Muslim unity had been broadly achieved, such occasional outbursts were still possible Such unity would survive the shocks of occasional outbursts, if the wiser and better minds among both the Hindu and Muslim communities exercised their influence properly Apart from the Moplah excesses, in Mahatmaji's opinion certain incidents that had happened at Calcutta on the 12th September were quite indefensible A certain Marwari trader on the refusal of an Oriya cooly to carry a bundle of foreign cloth, had so assaulted the latter that he became

half-dead The conduct of that Marwari gentleman was, there was not the least doubt, most reprehensible; nevertheless, his own conviction was that if that Oriya brother and his sympathisers had calmly borne that wrong, and not retaliated, then the foreign cloth trade of Calcutta would soon have come to a stop But it was a matter of the greatest regret to him to hear that a crowd, some twenty, or at the least computation, some ten thousand strong collected about that Marwari trader's shop, and were prepared to wreak vengence on him by assaulting him By such excitement and acts of violence there was not the least chance of our being brought near to the goal We must learn to keep our heads cool, and put up with ill-treatment without getting cowed down It was only thus that we could acquire the necessary morale for launching on a campign of Civil Disobedience, of peaceful revolt on a mass scale.

CHAPTER XX

ARREST OF MOULANA MAHOMED ALI

Leaving Midnapore, we reached Kharagpore at 8 in the evening, where we met Maulana Mahomed Ali, who had come by the Madras Mail, prepared to go to Madras Jamnadas had also come with Mahatmaji's luggage The expected messenger from Bombay also came as far as Kharagpore, and delivered to Mahatmaji a letter for him from Maulana Shaukat Ali in which he wrote to say that he had had information of the impending arrest of himself as well as of his brother Mahatmaji had a berth reserved for him from Calcutta, which he now occupied, while, Prabhudas and I got in where we conveniently could Passing through the greater part of Orissa during the night, we found ourselves in the morning on the borders of Orissa and the Andhra country We were much impressed with the hospitality of the people here For when they heard that Mahatmaji would be passing that way to Madras, they had on their own initiative made ample provision for Mahatmaji's comforts

Reaching Waltair station at 2 30 P M we found one half of the platform completely occupied and guarded by a body of soldiers With their military pomp and display, hey looked stern and grim, and cowed the people around utter silence Seeing this military array, we thought into mething extraordinary was going to happen But that so. slowly passed the line of soldiers, and stopped train .

where the platform was free There the passengers got down, and I, too got down and went to see Mahatmaji. Then the Secretary of the local Congress Committee came with some friends to request Mahatmaji and Maulana Mahomed Ali to come and briefly address the people gathered outside All this while the armed soldiers merely stood still, and the train itself remained on the further side of the platform, away from the troops This led me to think that these preparations might after all have nothing to do with the Maulana Saheb Both Mahatmaji and the Maulana Saheb got down from the train in response to the Congress Secretary's request, and proceeded outside. Some four or five seconds after this, the train was moved back to that side of the platform which was guarded by the troops, and I noticed that the European Officer in charge of the force, with four or five of his men, hurried away outside the station in breathless haste Some two or three minutes after, the other soldiers also formed themselves into a line, and quickly marched out of sight

All this happened before my own eyes What took place outside the station, I shall relate as I heard it from Mahatmaji's own lips He and Maulana Saheb were walking to the meeting he before, and the Maulana behind, when two Europeans with a few soldiers came from behind and arrested the Maulana Mahatmaji did not stop For there was a big crowd assembled, and Mahatmaji, apprehending that if they got excited they might get out of control, and there might be bloodshed, thought of leading the crowd away from the spot, and the crowd followed him as he moved away Thus when Maulana Saheb got arrested, Mahatmaji could not exchange a word with him Proceeding

to the place of meeting he gave the audience a few words of exhortation saying that they were required to keep calm and strictly to carry out the instructions of the Congress. Then he returned to where the Maulana Saheb was kept in custody, and asked the officer in charge, if he could have permission to speak to the Maulana. The officer said that the order was that only his wife and his secretary might for a few minutes be permitted to see him. Then, Mahatmaji said with a smile, " I become his private secretary, if you have no objection." The officer smilingly answered that he had no option in the matter.

Mr. Hayat, Maulana Saheb's secretary, was standing by at the time, and when he heard that he and the Beguam Saheba would be permitted to see him, he ran in breathless haste to the Begum Saheba's compartment and escorted her to the spot. A few minutes after Mahatmaji was seen returning with the Begum Saheba and Mr. Hayat on either side of him, eagerly followed by a sad and silent multitude. The Begum Saheba was walking with proud, rapid steps. When Mahatmaji asked her, " Are you feeling nervous ?", she replied, " Oh, no." Mahatmaji returned to his compartment, and Mr. Hayat went to escort the Begum Saheba to hers, but soon returning he informed Mahatmaji that she had spoken to her husband in terms of high encouragement telling him that on no account must he worry about her. Mr. Hayat reported also that the Maulana Saheb had enjoined him to kiss Mahatmaji's hand in his name, and kneeling down, Mr. Havat took the hand of Mahatmaji and kissed it with exuberance of emotion. An old maidservant of the Begum Saheba was travelling in our compartment. When I once had occasion to go there, in most anxious

tones she asked "What's the matter", "what's the matter?", and then fell to weeping. It seemed to us as if within the twinkling of an eye some great unforeseen calamity had overtaken us. But as a matter of fact, there was no room for any surprise in the matter, for the Maulana Saheb's arrest had been talked about for a pretty long time. But the way in which the arrest was carried out, the pomp of military display, and the abruptness and secrecy observed, made the whole transaction inspire awe. It was as if a tiger had been stealthily pursuing its victim, and had suddenly fallen upon him from the rear. When one near and dear to a man is spirited away in a manner like this, the very suddenness of the occurrence awes and stuns, much like this was the state of our feelings at the sudden disappearance of Mahomed Ali from our view. On one side of the station was a small room where Maulana Saheb was kept confined. There, it seemed to me that his loud bursts of laughter, his frank, straightforward talks, and his tall, tranquil figure were all equally undergoing confinement. If only he had been granted a minute or two to bid good-bye to his friends and associates, the arrest would not have appeared to them as anything but a merry episode, and not the cruel blow that it was felt to be by reason of the abruptness and mysteriousness of the whole transaction.

The Maulana Saheb's servant stayed behind at Waltair with a few of his things. Mahatmaji instructed the local Congress Secretary to keep himself informed as to where Maulana Saheb was taken, and to send to Madras any information he could obtain. Then without losing a moment he drafted a long telegram in pencil and handed it to us for despatch to all the principal papers. We copied out the telegram

and took it to the Telegraph office at the next station, but were told that under Government orders no telegrams could be despatched for full twenty-four hours, and that therefore our telegram could be sent after the lapse of 24 hours After a brief recital of the news of Maulana Saheb's arrest the telegram proceeded to say —

"There is no cause for sorrow, but every cause for congratulation There should be no hartal Perfect peace and calm should be observed I regard the arrest as a prelude to Swaraj and the redress of Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs, if we can remain non-violent, retain Hindu-Muslim unity, despite the madness of some Moplahs, and fulfil the Swadeshi programme

"I hope every Indian, man or woman, will completely boycott foreign cloth, and take up spinning or weaving during every spare minute

"By striving like the Moulana, be insistent on religious and national rights

"Let us earn imprisonment I am conscious of the Moulana's innocence, and I am sure the imprisonment of the innocent will enable the nation to reach the cherished goal

"The Moulana was quite calm So is the Begum Saheba She accompanies me during the travel So does Moulana Azad Sobhani"

Several other telegrams were also despatched in different directions Then, after asking me to take a copy of the warrant of arrest, Mahatmaji proceeded to write the article which was published in the *Young India* of the 22nd September under the title of "The Last Act?" In spite of the stoppage of telegraphic communications for twenty four hours, we found the people at every station putting to us

the same question in eager and excited tones, "How is Mahomed Ali? Where is Mahomed Ali?" Thus misfortune cast its shadow on loving hearts by the mere power of sympathy

At every place on the way Mahatmaji gave the news of the arrest and then in brief words exhorted the people to preserve calm He told those that were not wearing Khaddar that they must surrender their foreign cloth, even if they had to be content with the merest loin-cloth to cover their nakedness He comforted them with the assurance that if they kept the peace and carried out his instructions, they would soon succeed in winning Swaraj and liberate the Ali Brothers. for he suspected the arrest of Maulana Shaukat Ali at Bombay that very day The turn of Deshabandhu Das would come next, that of Lala Lajput Rai would follow, and if, notwithstanding all these provocations, the people were able to remain calm, and there were no breaches of the peace, then his arrest would follow at the very end At a certain station on the way two former students of the Aligarh College came to meet Mahatmaji, they said that the Maulana Saheb was their teacher and that they were feeling like orphans in his absence Mahatmaji looking steadily to the ground said Never mind We will soon get him back free" The sky having been overcast we had no idea that the sun had gone down, and so when Prabhudas lighted the stove and prepared to boil the milk for Mahatmaji, he reminded Prabhudas that the sun had already set and that he would have no food that evening

CHAPTER XXI

MADRAS—I

Passing through the Andhra country in the night, we noticed at every station on the platform unnumbered people waiting with torchlights in their hands to offer welcome to Mahatmaji Wherever the train stopped, two or three of the local leaders would come and exchange a few words with Mahatmaji, and then report the substance of Mahatmaji's message to the assembled multitude in a ringing voice so as to be heard by all After which the leaders whirling their hands round over their heads would raise joyous shouts, and the multitude would in chorus cry 'Victory to Mahatma Gandhi Thus it happened that the incessant noise of the moving train followed by the din of the roaring multitude would almost deafen our ears In the evening we were joined by the distinguished Andhra leader, Desha-bhakta Konda Venkatappayya, who drew our hearts by his calm, gentle and dignified figure and his perfect humility so natural to him The whole of the night was passed in this fashion, and when the morning dawned we were nearing Madras At Basin Bridge the station next before the Madras Central Station, the distinguished leaders of Madras met us, and escorted Mahatmaji, Begum Mahomed Ali, and Maulana Azad Sobhani, in a special train to Madras Lest the passengers should be put to great inconvenience by the crowd at the Madras Station, the main train was detained for some length of time at the Basin Bridge Station until

after Mahatmaji had left by the special train Mr Hayat, Jamnadas, and myself remained in the Mail train in charge of our things, while Prabhudas accompanied Mahatmaji Reaching the Central Station later we found that all the crowd had left with Mahatmaji Begum Mahomed Ali Saheba being the guest of the local Khilafat Committee, Mr Hayat went there, while Jamnadas and I sought the hospitality of a Guzarati merchant called Ramji Kalyanji, at Sullivan's Road, San Thome, where Mahatmaji had already preceded us

We had left Calcutta on the morning of the 13th September, and reached Madras on the morning of the 15th Mr Ramji Kalyanji's mansion was built after the old Hindu style of architecture, there were no arches over the doors, large granite slabs acted as supports The rooms also mostly looked like what I had seen in pictorial illustrations of old Hindu architecture This showed that the traditions of Hindu architecture were not dead in Madras But modernism also came in to redress the balance of the old For we noticed that up to date devices of modern applied science had been laid under requisition, as if to propitiate the spirit of the Modern Age

When we reached our quarters, the first thing that met my eyes was Mahatmaji's being interviewed on the political situation by a European representative of the Anglo-Indian paper *Madras Mail* No sooner did this gentleman leave than another gentleman with a prepossessing smile on his face entered He was the representative of another paper, the local *Daily Express* The eagerness of the papers for news reflected the excitement in the city over the arrest of Maulana Mahomed Ali Arriving in Madras we received

information that Maulana Shaukat Ali, Dr Kitchlew, and the other co accused in the Karachi trial had been arrested also about the same time The one question on every body's lips was "what must we do now? What is Mahatmaji's order for us now?" The reporter of the daily *Hindu* came and took down a detailed report of Mahomed Ali Saheb's arrest from Jamnadas The representative of the *Daily Express* came a second time with an English artist, and went away with sketches of Mahatmaji, while he was engaged in writing, and so on The spinning wheel in Mahatmaji's room was a special attraction for the artist, who turning round and round viewed from different angles and made sketches of it But when these sketches appeared in print, they made a poor show Mahatmaji had lost some of the front teeth, the reporters were careful to take note of the fact! However, on the whole it struck me that the way in which the Madras newspapers were conducted was creditable, so much so that journalism in Bengal seemed to be half a century behind in comparison

According to the Congress system of classification, the province known politically as the Presidency of Madras is split up into three separate provinces the two chief being the Andhra Desha (the country of the Andhras) in the north, and Tamil Nadu (the Tamil country) in the South, with Kerala (modern Malabar) as the third The vernacular of Andhra Desha is Telugu, while that of Tamil Nadu is Tamil I saw the leaders of both these provinces seated in conference with Mahatmaji, but none of the leaders of Malabar could come Those were the days of the Moplah outbreak in Malabar, and they were too busy in connection

therewith Further, Martial law having been proclaimed in that country egress and ingress had become a difficult matter One reason for his Madras visit was the desire of Mahatmaji and Mahomed Ali to proceed to Malabar and restore peace there, but the Maulana Saheb had been arrested on the way, and now at Madras Mahatmaji also received an intimation from the Government which forbade his entrance into Malabar This letter was at once forwarded by Mahatmaji to the *Hindu* for publication People about us were saying that the Chief Secretary to the Madras Goverment was the virtual ruler of the Province, and that he was not the man to miss the excellent opportunity offered by the Moplah rebellion to crush the spirit of the people, copying the example of Messrs O'Dwyer and Thompson in the Punjab As far as I could make out, the popular belief at Madras was that the policy behind the prohibition was to make sure that the opportunity in question was not lost by Mahatmaji's success in restoring peace in Malabar

On reaching Madras, we began to realise that the problems of the country were getting too complicated every day, and that Mahatmaji alone of all people had the moral strength and the capacity to steer the course of events in the face of this growing complication It was not possible for us, his followers, to keep our heads cool, and judge of events in their rapid succession, in their true perspective. Our position was more like soldiers on the march in the battle-field, who have no time to look behind, nor to retrace steps even if they wished The present with its multitudinous array of events would so obsess our intelligence and understanding that it was not possible for us either to look into the past, or to look forward into the future It

was altogether a new kind of life with which I was confronted, but even to this I was gradually getting subdued

In Bengal, Mahatmaji had chiefly concerned himself with the question of Swadeshi or Khaddar, but in Madras, it seemed to me that the Khaddar movement was in an even more unsatisfactory plight Besides, there was the problem of untouchability for which Madras had earned an unenviable notoriety Mahatmaji had made up his mind that the programme of Swadeshi should have to be completed by the end of September But my feeling at the time was that collection of a crore of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund was a comparatively easy affair, seeing that the spirit of Swadeshi was not finding a lodgement in the hearts of the people with the same ease Wherever Mahatmaji came, there was nothing wanting in the matter of enthusiasm and excitement, and of cheers for Mahatmaji But the problem which set me athinking at the time was, "When and how would it be possible to effect that change of heart among the entire body of our people, which would make them take Khaddar as to a vow?" For it was clear that if the Swadeshi made only a superficial mark on their minds, and did not transform their character, there was no likelihood of the Khaddar movement leaving any abiding results

The people of the Andhra country were now much exercised over a 'Grazing tax' which the Government had imposed upon them As people were unable to pay this tax, the cattle of whole villages were taken away and impounded Neither were the cows properly fed, and they were kept apart from their calves, which of course was a great misery to the latter This state of things had given rise to much excitement among the masses

there, and the leaders had come to seek Mahatmaji's permission to start Civil Disobedience

Then, there was another question on which Mahatmaji was called upon to decide The Hindus of Malabar were suffering extreme mental torture because of a number of forced conversions of Hindus at the hands of the Moplah rebels *Some of the Malabar Hindus had come to lay their* case before Mahatmaji They were beside themselves with anger and grief The Moplahs could never be forgiven for what they had done, and unity between them and the Hindus was unthinkable —this was the burden of their statements Mahatmaji spoke sweetly to them to soothe their grieved spirits, but he told them at the same time that if they abandoned themselves to those feelings, Hindu-Moslem unity would remain an unsolved problem There was not the slightest doubt that the conduct of the Moplahs had been most reprehensible, nevertheless Mahatmaji would advise them to bear with dignity the pain which had been gnawing at their hearts Not only so, but he also considered it their duty to take upon themselves the task of so training the Moplahs that they might in future behave like decent, peace loving people

Then there was the anti-Brahmin movement of the Southern Presidency to which Mahatmaji's attention was here called A printed circular letter issued by the non-Brahmins was now put into his hands He showed it to some of the distinguished people of the city, and he called it "a most amazing document" "Down with the Brahmins", such was the title given to it, and its language was such as to make one feel that if the Hindus did not take time by the forelock and set about solving the non-Brahmin

problem, then fierce revolutionary intercaste hostilities would break out in South India at no distant date Mahatmaji drew the attention of the principal men, who had come to see him, to the seriousness of the question with a view to have the evil removed

Since he had been in Madras, Mahatmaji had become the central figure to whom all political parties in the city, except that of Mrs Besant, turned for guidance and counsel Besides the arrest of the Ali Brothers had added to his responsibility and his attention to work was now, if possible, more whole-hearted

On the morning of the 16th came Mr. Hayat to inform us that the Maulana Saheb's servant had come back with the news that the Maulana Saheb, after being kept confined in the Vizagapatam jail for a night, had been taken northwards by a special train From this we inferred that he was then being taken to Karachi Then Mr Hayat in mournful tones recited that in the Vizag jail, the Maulana Saheb had been given only bread and milk for the night which he declined to partake of, and that as a consequence he had to fast the whole night Mahatmaji had for the time taken to silence just to get through some urgent piece of work, but hearing what Mr Hayat said, he could no longer restrain himself but with shakes of his head burst out laughing Bread and milk was, of course, Mahatmaji's usual fare, but could such powerfully built frames like those of the Ali Brothers sustain themselves on such fare? The Government apparently thought that since Mahatmaji, prince among non-co-operators, could support himself on mere bread and milk, every other non co-operator could similarly live on a course of bread and milk diet!

CHAPTER XXII

MADRAS—II

At Madras Mahatmaji addressed a monster meeting on the beach on the evening of the 15th Large numbers were eagerly waiting to hear him, as it was his first public utterance after the arrest of the Ali Brothers Mahatmaji began by exhorting his hearers not to indulge in cheering, or in cries of "Shame, Shame," as by mere condemnation of the acts of Government, we could not advance our cause in the least If we really wanted to do something, we would go about to work with greater determination than ever The time before us was so limited, and the programme before us was so big, and therefore it was a problem how best we should set about our business so as to be able to finish it within the prescribed period But we had reason to be thankful that God was with us and was working on our side, and so he called upon all to cherish the faith that although we were so weak, and wanting in competence just at present, we might if God so willed it, so develop our strength as to be able to wrest success in no time

Referring to the arrest of the Ali Brothers, Mahatmaji said that he looked upon it as a blessing from on high The Brothers, true heroes as they were, had pursued the path of Truth and Righteousness with all their strength Maulana Mahomed Ali had been proceeding to Malabar with the laudable object of restoring peace and order there, and yet he was arrested on the way, and the Viceroy had to justify

his conduct From the day on which the Maulana Saheb proclaimed his acceptance of the policy of non-violence, he had been constantly with him, and Mahatmaji could bear witness to the fact that he had not deviated by a hair's breadth from his promise of non-violence To all who had sought his advice, whether in public or in private, the Maulana Saheb had consistently maintained the need for non-violence And yet the Ali Brothers were no cowards It would be a great mistake to suppose that because of their promise and acceptance of non-violence, they had sacrificed their right of free speech, that is to say, of giving independent expression to their views He had not come across men who combined in their own character greater bravery and sincerity than the Ali Brothers If they had used harsh words on occasions they had done so in obedience to the dictates of Truth, and Mahatmaji fully believed that no other Mussalman had worked for peace in India in the way in which the Ali Brothers had done He held, therefore, that in imprisoning the Brothers the Government had really imprisoned the Khilafat

Then referring to the general policy of repression inaugurated in the country, to the reign of oppression in Malabar following on the Moplah rebellion, as also to the insult offered to many people there by the forcible removal of Khaddar caps and shirts from their bodies, and referring also to the campaign of putting the masses of the Andhra country to great harassment by the systematic seizure of their cattle, Mahatmaji declared that the only way to free ourselves from such acts of tyranny would be to go on vigorously prosecuting the present agitation strictly on the lines of non-violence If, indeed, we must preserve our

national self-repect so as to compel the Government to concede the national demands, and if we must set free Maulana Mahomed Ali and the other devoted servants of the country, who had been unwarrantably cast into prison, then the only way left to us would be to put our whole soul into the work of winning Swaraj

But how was this Swaraj to be won. Mahatmaji answered that for himself he could prescribe nothing better than the practice of non-violence, the preservation of Hindu-Moslem unity, and the adoption of Khaddar It was his belief that the more the spirit of non violence permeated the country, the more the spirit of Hindu-Moslem unity could grow Then he pointed out that one sure sign of the growth of the non-violent spirit, and of Hindu-Moslem unity in the country would be the wider and wider adoption of Khaddar by the people at large He said that his heart burned within him to note the abundance of foreign cloth on the persons of his hearers, and then pointing to the example presented by Begum Mahomed Ali Saheba, as well as by the Ali Brothers, in the matter of their dress, Mahatmaji exhorted them well, all men and women, to follow their example, giving up their foreign clothing and taking to the use of Khaddar

Mahatmaji went on emphasising the point by saying that there might be people who might object to, or, for want of necessary stamina, fail to carry out, some of the other items of non-co-operation, but with regard to Swadeshi there could be, or ought to be, no two opinions Swadeshi was the *dharma* of every Indian, from the highest to the lowest As our fight was a religious fight, therefore there could be, God willing, no sort of distinction of high and low in our army, and hence the right of using Khaddar,

and through Khaddar acquiring the right of forming an integral part of the national army, belonged to everyone, rich or poor, old or young, healthy or sick, touchable or untouchable.

Mahatmaji then proceeded to give out his whole heart about the Charkha It is simply impossible for him to keep under control the intense feelings of delight he feels when expatiating on the virtues of the spinning wheel He could see, he said, the Goddess of India's fortune seated in the charkha The Charkha would cure us of our national lethargy and give us strength, and the confident assurance of final success It gave the surest indication of how far the spirit of non-violence had permeated the country It was the best means of bringing about unity among the different races in India, not merely Hindu-Moslem unity, but the bond of indissoluble amity among all the diverse races inhabiting the Indian continent The Charkha should be regarded as the best safeguard and emblem of the chastity of women, for Mahatmaji said that he could bear witness to the fact that for the want of the Charkha many an unfortunate woman had for a mere pittance to sell her virtue The Charka would become the widow's constant companion. It had been formerly the one support of the poor rayat during several months of the year and who should tell what vast numbers might not have owed the strength and the purity of their lives to the Charka Only when the spinning wheel went on working regularly in every home in India could it be possible to know for certain that we had ceased to hold bodily labour in contempt, that is, as something inferior to intellectual labour The charka would be the comforter of the untouchables and the only means of salva-

tion for the fallen women of the land And, lastly, declared Mahatmaji, only when the charkha had found a permanent place in our homes and become an integral part of our daily lives, should it be time to launch mass civil disobedience to help the country out of its fallen condition Disobedience of the law, under the influence of anger or excitement, could never be civil disobedience It would be criminal And if it was our aim said Mahatmaji, to work with a view to win Swaraj within this very year, then it was necessary to spread far and wide through every part of the country the forces of peace and non-violence, and if so, he knew of no other instrument than the spinning wheel which could help us to bring about the necessary purification on a nation-wide scale

Mahatmaji concluded his speech by again exhorting his hearers not to indulge in any kind of cries, noise or demonstration at public meetings For from long experience he had learnt that such demonstrations heated the blood and gave rise to anger, which in its turn led to violence Hence, if they should learn to be non-violent and work in a calm, dispassionate and organised manner, they should avoid all excitement He also warned them that the months before them would be months of imprisonment and suffering for the workers The darkest hour of the night was before the dawn, but that darkness was the herald of the dawn He therefore, called upon all to see with the eyes of faith, and behold the faint streaks of the coming morn piercing through the dense darkness which was then enveloping the country

CHAPTER XXIII

"SILENCE!" "SILENCE"!

We left Madras city on the morning of the 17th, September, and speeded south in the direction of Rameswaram. After touring the Tamil Nadu, Mahatmaji was to visit certain districts of the Andhra country on the northern route to Bombay. The programme of his tour in the Andhra districts had been already settled, but there was some delay in fixing the Tamil Nadu programme. So, for the present, he decided to go to Trichinopoly, after visiting Porto Novo, Cuddalore and Kumbhakonam.

Leaving our place, while it was still dark, we reached the Egmore station (Madras), when it was about day break to take the Rameswaram Express. It was a metre gauge section of the South Indian Railway; the carriages were of small size, but there was the convenience of a long corridor leading from one extremity of the train to the other. As soon as the train drew up along the platform, we hurriedly got in with all our luggage. There was no great crowd at the station. One thing I noticed throughout our tour in the South was that volunteers were much less in evidence there than elsewhere. Reaching the Villupuram station at 10 or 11, we found the crowd forming in such a solid mass that, in the expressive Bengali phrase, not even a mustard seed if let fall could find its way to the ground. There being no volunteers to regulate the crowd, everybody was trying to calm and restrain his fellows and this only gave rise to a

greater confusion and uproar Some were pressing down those in front by their shoulders, and calling upon them to sit down lustily crying 'Okka-rungo! Okka-rungo," i. e, sit down, sit down," while others were trying to silence them with shouts of "Sattam podadey" "sattam-podadey," i e, "silence, silence!" which only added to the volume of the noise While this terrible uproar and confusion was in full swing, Mahatmaji got down for a while, and soon returned with a bagful of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund But for us getting down was simply unthinkable If we got down there was no hope of our coming back to our places, for the pushing and jostling was so great that we were bound to drift far, far away. So we sat tight in our own places In the meanwhile, a batch of some ten or twenty would make their way perspiring through the crowd, and gaze at us through the window of our carriage They had soon to retire being forced to leave under pressure from behind, and would be presently succeeded by another batch of some ten or twenty, and so on till the train left the station There was an air of quickness in the speech, the actions, and the general movements of the Tamil people, which I had not particularly noticed among the peoples of other provinces I had so far come across

Reaching Porto Novo at 1-30 P M, we were the guests of a Dutch lady, by name Miss Peterson, who lived at a great distance from the station Though a foreigner and Christian, she was dressed in Sari like all Indian women, and walked barefoot like them She had also learnt to speak Tamil We saw a good number of spinning wheels in her house, she had to give lessons in spinning to Indian ladies of the place, and I could easily guess that she held

Mahatmaji in high esteem She had built a school, and she had resolved to get it opened by Mahatmaji There were with her at the time two other European ladies, who had come to assist her in her work of hospitality They were, however, dressed in European costume, but the way in which they ministered to our comforts left nothing to be desired

After performing the opening ceremony of Miss Peterson's school, Mahatmaji was to motor to Cuddalore, a distance of some twenty miles, to address a meeting there As there was not much time, Mahatmaji was urged to make haste But no sooner had he arrived at Porto Novo than a number of Christian ladies and gentlemen engaged him in a religious talk with them and he entered into a heart to heart talk with them as though he was a brother in faith He informed them that in South Africa his most intimate friends were mostly Christians, and then he began to tell his reminiscences in connection with them A time had also come in his own life when he was faced with the question of embracing Christianity, but God had ordained otherwise On this an Indian Christian lady said that they had still hopes of his conversion, as it was their faith that there was no hope of salvation for any one who did not accept Christianity Christ alone was the Prince of Peace, and nobody else could give peace At this Mahatmaji shook his head and smiled, and said ' That, of course, is your faith, but so exactly is the belief of Hindus that Hinduism alone could give salvation, and the Mussalmans also similarly believe the same in respect of their own religion " Then alluding to a certain famous Christian Missionary, he went on to say,—" When I first met him in

South Africa, the first question he put to me was, "Have you got peace?", to which I replied "Yes, I have" He was surprised, and asked me how, not being a Christian, I could have found peace Then after a pause, Mahatmaji continued, "Truth to say, if only we could get at and understand the fundamentals of all the different religions, all the ill-feeling and jealousy that they have given rise to are bound to disappear For all the different practices and observances prescribed by different denominations have for their ultimate objective the purification of man Nevertheless my conviction is that Hinduism is the most scientific of religions, and therefore it is that I hug Hinduism to my bosom In this I may not be accused of bigotry, for I have steered my course after scrutinising and examining everything" Among the Christian audience was a gentleman who appeared to me to be a Bengali from his general appearance and his flowing beard, but I was soon disillusioned for as soon as Mahatmaji had left for his bath he began to sing aloud a Tamil song

After visiting Miss Peterson's school Mahatmaji left for the Cuddalore meeting I stayed behind with Prabhudas and Anwaruddin the pupil and follower of Maulana Azad Sobhani Poor Anwar unable to understand Tamil, or to make himself understood through his Urdu, was now put to such trouble that he began to express his regret that the Maulana Saheb should have brought him to such a place as the Tamil country As soon as Mahatmaji had left for Cuddalore all the noise and the hubbub ceased There is nothing specially worth seeing at Porto Novo, but its name carries with it some historical associations The town, first founded by the Portuguese in the 16th century, passed

subsequently into the hands of European powers one after another, who succeeded in establishing for the time political ascendancy for itself in the south, finally coming into the possession of the English Here at Porto Novo a fierce fight had been fought by the English with Hyder Ali, the famous Prince of Mysore It is the view of some historians that, if the English had been beaten in this fight, it would not have been possible for the English to establish their domination over South India The river Vellar flows by a side of the town, falling into sea near by Some of the houses here belong to rich Arab traders, who have survived here as relics of a by-gone Arab supremacy on the Indian Ocean, which had lasted for many a long century until it was finally superseded by European domination on the Indian seas

It was one O' clock at night when Mahatmaji returned from Cuddalore, and at 6-30 in the morning we had to leave, bag and baggage, for Kumbakonam Reaching the station, we found that the particular train we had intended to take was a Parcels Train, which carried no passengers at all The station officials, however, were good enough to empty a carriage for us, and so we were enabled to reach Kumbakonam at 11 O' clock Here is a big tank, called the "Mahamakham Tank" into which the Ganges is believed to flow once in twelve years, when hundreds of thousands of people earn the merit of a bath in the Ganges by a dip in its waters But, I who had come from the banks of the great Ganges at Benares, could hardly be expected to enter with any feeling into the greatness of a body of waters which had only a reflected glory That very day at 5 P M. we were to leave Kumbakonam again Immediately after arriving here,

Mahatmaji took to silence, which lasted till 2 P M after which he left for a meeting of the local weavers His advice to them was that they must make up their minds to renounce drinking and the weaving of foreign yarns, that they must weave Khaddar and nothing but Khaddar Then he came to the public meeting But what sort of a meeting was this? In spite of my being by Mahatmaji's side, I found myself too weak to elbow my way to the meeting place The noise and rush not abating even when Mahatmaji had begun to speak, he could not proceed Then Maulana Azad Sobhani tried his best to get the crowd under control, but all in vain For each one among the hearers felt it his duty to call upon everybody else to keep the peace The cry of "Shattam podadey, Shattam podadey," (Silence, silence!) was on everybody's lips, and so there was a horrible din instead of a calm Mahatmaji and the Maulana Saheb then left the meeting to catch the train at 5 P M

CHAPTER XXIV

TRICHINOPOLY—I

Leaving Kumbakonam on the 18th September, we reached Trichinopoly at 8 P M It being Sunday, Mahatmaji had to take his vow of silence after sunset On previous Sundays, I had seen him beginning silence at 7 P M But that evening he was chatting with us in the train, and it was already past seven I feared that through inadvertance he might be breaking his rule, and so I reminded him that it was past seven, when his silence was to begin He smiled a little at my anxiety for the strict observance of his rule, and stopping short in the middle of his talk, took up silence rather abruptly On subsequent Sundays however, I found that he observed no particular rule as to the silence beginning punctually at seven in the evening It was enough if it began at some hour in the early part of Sunday night, and continued up till the corresponding hour on monday night For the first time in the course of many days I had that day seen him chatting with us freely, and it pains me to think, that on account of my inexperience I stood in the way of his much needed relaxation

At Trichinopoly we were agreeably surprised to note that although there was an immense gathering on the station platform, everybody respected Mahatmaji's vow of silence, and there was consequently no uproar Thus he was able to get down from the train quite peacefully, and he was also peacefully taken to his appointed quarters The order and

calm which we witnessed here, came as a balm to our nerves exhausted by the terrible confusion caused by the crowds during the last two days We were the guests of Dr Rajan, Congress Provincial Secretary, at his home near the station. Dr. Rajan's home had then become almost an Ashram * He informed Mahatmaji that he had made it a rule in his home that no cloth should be bought for any member but that every one was to spin the yarn required for his or her clothing Dr Rajan's house was situated in the midst of a large garden, far from the din and bustle of the town, and to us it seemed that after buffeting stormy weather we had reached a haven of peace where we might enjoy some rest and respite for some time

The next day being Monday, except for some special need, no one was to be permitted to approach Mahatmaji. Most of the time I sat near him keeping guard He looked much wearied The night previous after retiring he had to get Prabhudas to shampoo his legs for a pretty long time. That noon also he felt the need of such shampooing, and he wrote down for me "My legs require oiling and shampooing ' This was the first occasion for me to touch his body. and when I was engaged in shampooing, he softly closed his eyes and fell into a short nap

Often during the last two days I had noticed Mahatmaji intently studying a booklet on the unemployment problem in connection with the middle classes of India The author believed that in his book he had devoted himself to the task of developing in a practical manner the economic ideals on which Mahatmaji's movement was based As I was already

* A sort of a hermitage where the members were put under strict discipline.

conversant in part with the author's views, I availed myself of my leisure to write down a short criticism, explaining wherein Mahatmaji's views and ideals differed from the author's This I placed before Mahatmaji for his perusal He looked over my paper and wrote down on it a few words of comment While approving of my criticism of the author's views, he disagreed with my contention that the unemployment question in India was but a part of the general unemployment problem agitating the present capitalist world and was but a manifestation of the self same disease Marking passages where I had explained this view, he wrote against it on the margin, "Is that so?" At the first blush I could not follow his criticism, but subsequent reflection convinced me that he was right, and I was wrong Unemployment in India with all its attendent starvation and suffering, I then saw, was the result of the exploitation of our wealth by Western Industrialism, while unemployment in Western countries was the result of the inequitable distribution of the wealth produced by hard worked labour This distinction had escaped me for the time being What had primarily engrossed my thoughts was the undoubted fact that under the influence of capitalism, our village communal life had been broken up, and our people had been forced to leave their homes and go abroad in search of means of subsistence To my mind the future of the country was thus most gloomy, and I pictured to myself the grim spectre of destruction slowly rearing its head and overtaking the whole country In Europe also, the same thing had taken place a century ago, with the destruction of village life in the wake of the introduction of machinery. And comparing this with India's present state of things, I

had contented myself with making Capitalism responsible for it. It was Mahatmaji's query that set me athinking and made me realise that the root cause of India's misery was the heartless exploitation of the masses of India by the force of Western Capitalism I had concluded my note with the following —"In India we do not require to build on any new basis, but only to revive by brining life blood into the dying or decaying parts of the social politic Therefore, the mere insistance by the author on the need for the use of the hand or manual labour for productive purposes does not prove that his plan of work is identical with the plan of resuscitation aimed at by the movement of non-co-operation " Mahatmaji had nothing to say against this part of my criticism and I inferred that he was in agreement with me

By this time the papers had announced that the Ali Brothers had been taken to Karachi for trial on the charge of spreading disaffection among Indian troops On the day of our stay at Trichinopoly, Mr Hayat, Maulana Mohamed Ali's secretary came to see Mahatmaji and returned to Madras in the evening, spending the whole of the day in copying out the relevant portions of Mahatmaji's lengthy correspondence with the Viceroy, Lord Reading, in the matter of the "Statement" issued by the Ali Brothers.*

Mahatmaji was to motor to a place called the Chettinad

*This "statement' by the Ali Brothers issued shortly after Lord Readings arrival in India as Viceroy is one of the outstanding incidents connected with the non co-operation movement The Viceroy's diplomatic cunning shone no where better than in the manner in which he handled the matter The subject is discussed at full length in a future chapter under the Caption—"Diplomatic Cunning of the Government."

the next day Part of the route to Chettinad lay through the Indian State of Pudukottah On receipt of intimation that Mahatmaji would be going that way, the Pudukottah Durbar sent a letter to him intimating that his entrance into the State was prohibited Though this road lay within the boundaries of Pudukottah, it had all along been freely used by people, nor had the Durbar ever exercised its right of jurisdiction over it The issue of this unexpected order, therefore, was generally believed to have been the work of the British Resident of the State Dr Swaminatha Sastry, secretary of the local Congress Committee, said with a laugh that the State of Pudukottah could be covered by a simple jump, suiting his action to the work However, when the letter in question was placed before Mahatmaji, he wrote down a respectful reply telling the Durbar that he had cancelled his journey to Chettinad through the route in question

Mahatmaji s silence was broken at nightfall, and we made ready to go to the public meeting The public of Trichinopoly gave him a warm and splendid reception the like of which we had not witnessed before The route from his residence to the place of the public meeting was adorned at short intervals of distance with ornamental arches and various other decorations while at the meeting itself order and peace and organisation were in such striking evidence that Mahatmaji felt immensely pleased at the sight.

CHAPTER XXV

TRICHINOPOLY—II

The proceedings of the meeting began with the presentation of an address by the local Municipality and Congress Committee Mahatmaji's followed next He began by referring to the communique issued by the Bombay Government in which it declared that the arrest of the Ali Brothers was due to their having attempted to tamper with the loyalty of the Indian troops In the communique it was explained why the Government had thought that the Brothers were guilty of having committed the offence The communique referred to a Resolution passed at a Khilafat Conference held at Karachi, which had the support of the Ali Brothers That Resolution declared it 'haram' or sinful for a Mussalman to serve in the army under the present government. Mahatmaji declared that, if he had been present at the Karachi Conference, he too would have supported that Resolution For although his Mussalman brothers alone were competent to decide what was in accordance with their religion, and what was against it yet on behalf of the Hindus, and of Indians in general, he would say that, under the existing conditions, it was 'haram' for any Indian to work under the Government, whether in the army, or in any other department And if it was an offence to say so openly, or even in the presence of soldiers, he himself had been guilty of that offence times without number It was nothing new For he had deliberately, with a full knowledge of the consequences, committed it at the Calcutta Special Congress of

September 1920 Then he had repeated it at the Nagpur Congress of December 1920, and if he, or the representatives of the Congress, had not so far been able to go and declare the message of the Congress to soldiers or other Government servants individually, it was certainly due not to want of will, but to want of ability to support them In this unhappy land of ours, millions had to live starving from year's end to year's end The task of shouldering the responsibility of supporting all Government servants, who would leave their service would thus be doubly heavy Therefore, Mahatmaji repeated, it was because of his inability to support them that he was so far unable to call upon each one of them individually to sever his connection with the Government "But", said Mahatmaji, "let me ask the Government to take note that the moment I was convinced that the country had realised the full importance of handspinning and handweaving from the national point of view, and the hearts of the masses had been drawn towards Khaddar, and further, the moment I should feel convinced that the soldiers and other Government servants were prepared to take easily to the spinning wheel and the hand loom to earn their livelihood after they had left their service, that moment, if I was left free by the Government, or I was not disabled in any way, I should personally make an appeal to every soldier or other servant of the Government to leave his service"

Then alluding to the perfect peace that there was then prevailing in the country in spite of the arrest of the Ali Brothers, Mahatmaji expressed himself as extremely gratified, calling the peace a "divine peace", because, as he said, it had nothing to do with the fear of the Government bullet He believed that the hearts of the people were

growing stronger and stronger day by day, and it was only because of such strength of spirit that they were able to keep so calm. If, regardless of Government excesses and wrongs, they could thus preserve the peace right up to the end, he was convinced that this Government would ultimately feel compelled to ask the people's forgiveness for the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs

But in this connection, Mahatmaji continued, there was one great obligation laid upon the people, and it was this They will have to discard, every man and every woman among them, all their fine foreign clothing and garments, as so much poison And then he began to descant eloquently on the virtues of Khaddar, and ended his speech by a reference to the Moplah outbreak in Malabar, and by once more insisting on the vital need for Hindu-Moslem unity After he had concluded, Moulana Azad Sobhani spoke, followed by Mr Yakub Hassan, formerly a Barrister, and now a Khilafat leader of Madras The meeting broke up at 11 P M after which we returned to our place

The next morning (20th September), Mahatmaji was escorted to the neighbouring town of Srirangam by some of the local leaders Trichinopoly stands on the river Cauvery, which is here split into two branches, with a beautiful island in the middle On this island stands Srirangam with its great Vishnu temple of an all-India fame

On the outskirts of Trichinopoly, we had to cross the Cauvery by a bridge about half a mile long, beyond which stands Srirangam The town is nestled among dense cocoanut palms through which Mahatmaji drove, until he alighted at the Municipal office The Municipal address was presented in a silver casket, which Mahatmaji accepted with

the announcement that since he did not possess any box to keep such beautiful and costly gifts, the sale proceeds of the gift would go to the Tilak-Swaraj Fund He then pointed out that the Srirangam Municipality, as indeed every other Municipality in India, should devote themselves specially to three items of work First, they must see that no foreign cloth was imported within the Municipal limits, and that every one used Khaddar, secondly, they must prohibit the use of intoxicants, and thirdly, they must get rid of the evil of untouchability This brief reply to the Municipal address being over, Mahatmaji was escorted by the elite of the town to a shady retreat in a neighbouring garden, through whose dense foliage the sun's rays could hardly pierce There he was seated in a thatched shed, and an old blind pandit of Srirangam sang some sweet sanskrit verses in his praise All this while, the public of Srirangam were waiting in the open space to the south of the garden, anxiously expecting him So as soon as the Hindu orthodox ceremony of garlanding with flowers putting on the sandal paste on the forehead and the presentation of the "eight, fold oblation" was over, and Mahatmaji having smilingly accepted the same he emerged from the garden, and presented himself before the assembled audience

Here on behalf of the public, an address in English printed on palm leaves, in the old orthodox style was presented to Mahatmaji In reply, he said that the printing, beautiful as it was, would have been doubly beautiful, if it had been written in Tamil, or in Hindustani, the common language of India. For did it look well to employ English amongst our own selves? English, of course, was indispensable for communication with foreign people. He was himself an

admirer of English, and he believed that there was much in English for us to study But, as even the most beautiful things looked ugly when they were out of place, so there was something incongruous in the use of English in the present instance He wished, however, not to be misunderstood, because he had himself occasion to use English so often For, truth to say, whenever he found that Indian people were conversing among themselves with the help of English, his heart broke within him, for to him it betokened only the degradation of his country He had collected, therefore, a sum of Rupees fifty thousand from the Marwari community for the propagation of Hindi in the Madras Presidency, and his advice to his hearers was that instead of frittering away their energies in the attempt to excel in a knowledge of English, they should seek to acquire a competent knowledge of Hindi

Then, he concluded with a few words on the use of Khaddar, and the removal of untouchability Everywhere, in Madras he had been repeatedly urging on the people the need,for the removal of untouchability as this particular evil was more rampant in Madras than elsewhere. On the north, the most serious problem that confront us in our national life is the problem of Hindu-Moslem Unity, while that of untouchability is the most crying evil in the south In all that Mahatmaji said of untouchability in his speeches here, he was specially keeping in view the conditions of South India After his speech was over, we returned to Trichinopoly at 10 O'Clock

CHAPTER XXVI

IN FAKIR'S ATTIRE

Leaving Trichinopoly on the morning of the 21st September, we turned south towards Madura We were to make a few hours' stay at Dindigal on the way We reached the place at 11 A. M Almost the entire people of the town had turned out to receive Mahatmaji at the Station Reaching his appointed quarters, he began spinning, which always helped to refresh his spirits There he summoned me to take a copy of an article he had written while in the train Then after his meal at noon, he went out to receive the address of the local Municipality Shortly after he had returned we had to get ready to attend the public meeting Meantime, Mahatmaji was engaged in witnessing an exhibition of the marrvellous skill in spinning by three old ladies of the place From the meeting we were to proceed straight to the station, where taking train about 4. we were to reach Madura before sun-down

The meeting at Dindigal was quite as disorderly as the one we had a look at Kumbakonam Nobody seemed particularly anxious to listen to Mahatmaji, but the one anxiety of everybody was to have a look at him So while the audience busied themselves with their talks, Mahatmaji got through his speech somehow When, after Mahatmaji's speech, Maulana Azad Sobhani rose to speak, I left the meeting, and taking a volunteer with me went off to the station There I found a large body of sepoys (South Indian troops) patrolling the station under a European

officer It was exactly such a body of Indian troops that we had seen at Waltair, when Maulana Mahomed Ali was arrested, and the suspicion crossed my mind that Mahatmaji also might perhaps be arrested here But the suspicion did not take root, the smiling face of the white officer in charge, and his courteous demeanour dissipated my fears.

Shortly after, Mahatmaji arrived attended by a large following Getting into the train, he lost no time but proceeded to write something which he did very rapidly, and when the writing was finished, he gave it to Mr Rajagopalachary for perusal As there was a suffocating crowd on the side of Mahatmaji's compartment, I accommodated myself at some distance from him On the way there were monster gatherings at each and every station, and it was a sight to see how enthusiastic they were At Madura the crowd assembled to receive him was so tremendous that until Mahatmaji had left, it was simply impossible for any passenger to alight from the train, and even after his departure, it took some half an hour for the crowd to disperse from the platform From the Station he went straight to the place of public meeting, while we made for our quarters. On our way we noticed that the people everywhere were in high glee, and altogether the town wore a festive appearance, as on some day of great festival

Mahatmaji returned from the meeting shortly after we had arrived at our place As at Kumbakonam and at Dindigal, so also at Madura, the crowd was so unconscionably large and uncontrollable that he had to dissolve the meeting without making a speech As soon as he returned he told me immediately to make three copies of the document he had composed in the train, and to send one of

them to Mr. Kasturiranga Iyengar, Editor of the *Hindu*, another to the *Bombay Chronicle*, and the third to the *Independent* * He next enquired if there was any Associated Press Reporter at the place, but not such reporter was available It was 11 P M when the copies had been taken, and they were forthwith sent off to be posted at the station. Mahatmaji had now devised his own plan of nullifying the objective the Government had in starting the prosecution of the Ali Brothers and their co-accused in the Karachi trial The letters in question were letters of invitation to the various Provincial leaders to come and meet him at Bombay on the 4th October in conference to consider the issue raised by the authorities He then wrote an article for *Young India* under the title "Tampering with Loyalty", in which he further elucidated his views In that article he declared, as he had done in his Trichinopoly speech, that the offence of tampering with the loyalty of the troops for which the Ali Brothers were being prosecuted at the time was no new offence at all, as the Congress had been openly committing it ever since the Calcutta special Congress of September, 1920, while the Khilafat Committee had been guilty of the same even earlier, while he himself had begun it earlier still. He made the further declaration that if only he had the ability to support them, he would have unhesitatingly advised individual soldiers, or other government servants to leave their services And as for the charge laid in the Karachi case against the Ali Brothers of spreading disaffection, it had now become the prime duty of the Congress to spread such disaffection He called upon the people everywhere to

* Then a non-co-operation daily published from Allahabad.

hold thousands of public meetings, and read out in meetings assembled the famous "Fatwa of Karachi" This portion of Mahatmaji's article was objected to by some of his associates on the ground that it might create undue excitement in the country, but Mahatmaji refuted everyone of their arguments, and then expressed the opinion that in going to start prosecutions on the ground of the *Fatwa*, "the Government had really played into our hands" And so it really was For when later on this *Fatwa* was read out to the public from a thousand platforms, and the duty of soldiers as laid down in the *Fatwa* got broadcasted throughtout the country, the last state of the Government became worst than the first

As the month of September was rapidly drawing to a close, Mahatmaji began to feel more and more convinced of the failure of the country to put forth the requisite energy, determination and grit which he had been expecting of it in order that his Khaddar programme should be fulfilled in time He had, moreover, been an actual eye witness to the frightfully disorderly conduct of the crowds in meetings in Tamil Nadu, and he felt more than ever that as long as the masses were not taught the element of disciplined corporate action, there was no hope of starting Mass Civil Disobedience in the country And he had come also to believe more than ever that for infusing ideas of orderly and disciplined action into the minds of the masses, so as to make them amenable to collective control, there was nothing better than the Gospel of Khaddar The supreme value of Khaddar thus lay in its capacity silently to induce this transformation of character, and that is why Khaddar is so intimately related to Civil Disobedience. The failure of the

country to respond properly to the Khaddar programme made such a deep and painful impression upon his mind that Mahatmaji was now going to impose on himself a penalty—a penalty, partly by way of expiation, but partly by way of placing before the country an example to follow. The document which he had hurriedly written in the train at Dindigal, and which, afterwards he had asked me to copy and despatch to different places was a manifesto to the public, proclaiming that, as a sign of mourning, he would discard for a month his *dhoti*, vest and cap, and content himself with a mere loin-cloth, and, when needed an additional piece of cloth to be thrown over the upper part of the body. He called upon all those who were too poor to buy Khaddar, to adopt this sort of dress—the Fakirs dress, and remain satisfied with this irreducible minimum of clothing. In that manifesto he also exhorted workers everywhere to suspend all other Congress activities for the time being, and concentrate for one whole month on Khaddar-production and Khaddar propaganda and fulfil the Swadeshi programme. That night at Madura, Mahatmaji received visits from the members of different communities, but though he was freely conversing with everybody, he still appeared to me as wearing an unusually grave and thoughtful countenance. A group of Hindu ladies learned in Sanskrit had in the meantime arrived, and they began to sing songs in Sanskrit in high praise of Mahatmaji. Then, at 10 P. M. a barber was called in to shave his head. The man came and first reverently took the dust of Mahatmaji's feet, and proceeded to shave with all possible care. He felt himself honoured at having had the high privilege of thus touching Mahatmaji's body, and he declined to take anything as remuneration

for his work inspite of repeated offers made by us The grave countenance which Mahatmaji now wore, and his general behaviour at the time, as also the manifesto to the public which we had seen in the original induced in the hearts of Mahatmaji's followers and associates a feeling of indefinite fear It was clear in their minds that this change of costume was not meant to last for a month only, some were even apprehensive that this was but the beginning of his life as a *Sannyasin* * There was thus grief in the hearts of us all, and there was the shadow of anxiety on every face With a heavy heart we, all of us, sat round him till late in the night, attempting by a word or two to divert him from his thoughts

The next morning, Mahatmaji was to journey by motor to Karaikudi, a distance of some sixty miles from Madura Mahatmaji rose very early, and proceeded to change his dress His cap and vest he altogether discarded, and he had made a little Khaddar bag to carry the things he used to put in the pocket of his vest Then he wore a new piece of Khaddar not more than a cubit in width round his loins. Mr Rajagoapalachari and Dr Rajan now came and employed all kinds of arguments to dissuade Mahatmaji from his purpose Failing in all their efforts, they finally pressed him to wait for a few days more before taking the final step, but Mahatmaji gently explained his position, aud persuaded them to withdraw their request First of all, he assured them that it was no part of his intention to turn a *Sannaysin* The new style of dress he was adopting, he said, was nothing strange to the people there, for in the Madras Presidency people mostly went about with bare bodies

* One who renounces the world and turns an ascetic

Again, in Madras Province, Khaddar was least in evidence, and the power of Khaddar least felt, nor was there any discipline or order observable among the people Looking to all these things, Mahatmaji said his heart was bleeding and his present dress was but an expression of the intense pain he was feeling He realised that this change of dress would inflict the heaviest of shocks on the hearts of the Guzaratis, and he knew that he was subjecting Guzarat* to a sore trial Therefore, he had pondered very deeply, indeed, before finally deciding upon this course Looking at Mr Rajagopalachari, Mahatmaji said with a simle—" I may not be able to convince you, but I am absolutely clear about the correctness of the step I have taken " Mahatmaji said he had woke up at three in the morning and all those early hours of the morning he gave this matter his deepest thoughts, and he went on to describe the solemn stillness of those hours, broken only by the music of the chirpings of birds He was going to say something more, but he seemed to check himself rather abruptly I alone had slept in his room that night I woke up once at 3 30 A M and turned my eyes towards him, but I had no suspicion that he was not asleep Being, however, much fatigued on account of the journey with my limbs aching, I had again fallen asleep

When he had completed his change of attire Mahatmaji made ready to start for Karaikkudi Four cars were waiting at the gate to take him and his party The people of Madura had left their beds betimes, and gathered on the road to have a sight of Mahatmaji When he went

* Mahatmaji himself is a Guzarati, (i e) an inhabitant of Guzarat in Western India

and took his seat in his car in his new attire, all stood with their heads bent in sorrow, and as the car set out on its journey, the ruddy streaks of light of the rising sun fell full on his bare head and his bare limbs, and he looked a radiant mass of light

CHAPTER XXVII

TINNEVELLY

The night previous Mahatmaji had told us that only one of us should accompany him to Karaikkudi, and so only Prabhudas had left with him In the meantime the pain in my limbs had developed into a fever From my room I could see the "Gopuram*" of the celebrated temple of Madura Many tourists from abroad come to Madura merely to visit the temple Jamnadas went to pay a visit to the temple, and when he returned he broke out into ecstacies over its artistic beauty, and began to press me repeatedly to go and have a view of that marvellous specimen of Hindu architecture I was, however, not in a mood to go While at Sreerangam I had similarly viewed from a distance the famous temple of the place Nor could I call up then and there, the necessary devotional spirit in which alone a diety should be approached Further, from the moment of Mahatmaji's assumption of the ascetic's garb, my thought lay wholly engrossed in the new situation I felt that that was not the time for the study and understanding of our ancient national life and history, or for the appreciation and enjoyment of ancient Indian art and architecture

After Mahatmaji's departure, I was absorbed all day in thoughts of my own as to what I should do at that juncture The new attire that Mahatmaji now put on befitted him and him alone In his case, there could be the least suggestion of affectation or outward display Mahatmaji's heart was

*A huge gateway in the old Hindu style of architecture.

bleeding at the sight of the poverty and distress of the teeming millions of this country and anything that he might do to assuage his hearts' anguish would be justified as being a natural expression of his most sacred feelings But if others, who did not feel the same burning pain within them, took to the same course as Mahatmaji, that would be a mere blind imitation or affectation, and nothing else

So I began to analyse my feelings and came to the conclusion that I did not feel enough pain in my heart at the sufferings of my unhappy countrymen such as would justify me in following Mahatmaji and take up his vow Nevertheless the fact stared me in the face that I was there with him to serve him and be his constant personal attendant Was it possible for me to be a daily witness to this bodily suffering of his and yet remain indifferent to the same, not caring to share it with him? I suffered a good deal under the stress of these conflicting emotions Then I began to look at the matter from another point of view I asked myself "Who could emulate Mahatmaji in his purity, in his simplicity, and his devotion to and love of truth? If so, would it not be an act of senselessness on my part to affect to approach Mahatmaji ever so little by copying his manner? But I had been getting attracted towards him, and my admiration and reverence for him have been growing as the result of my constant association with him From that point of view, I thought, I should not be acting a part if I did something to satisfy that side of my character" As the result of cogitations like these, I finally came to the conclusion that for a time at least, I should forego the use of my vest, but that as regards the loin cloth, I must not adopt it

Now, as I woke up next morning (23rd September) I found that my fever had completely gone That very day 12 noon, we were to leave Madura, for Tinnevelly, and it was now long past the hour when Mahatmaji was to have come back from Karaikkudi Jamnadas suggested that Mahatmaji might have made straight for the station, and so we prepared to depart with all our luggage Just at this time, Mahatmaji and party arrived There was only half an hour for the train to leave, and we must reach the station within that time But when they all came, and saw the lack-lustre countenance of Mahatmaji and the rest of the escorting party I felt an uneasy apprehension Prabhudas said that I had done well not to come with them, as otherwise, I should have collapsed under the strain They had suffered terribly from the dust and heat of the road, as also on account of the crowds that had assembled on the way However, we were all able to leave for the station in time to take the train for Tinnevelly

About sunset, the leaders of Tinnevelly met Mahatmaji at the station before Tinnevelly, and took him to Tinnevelly by motor Mahatmaji was thus enabled to avoid the crowd We reached Tinnevelly by train a little after sunset, and when we reached our quarters, we found Mahatmaji engaged in talk with the local leaders Shortly, afterwards, he sent for me and asked—"Krishnadas, Kal tap ayatha? (Did you have fever yesterday?) I did not then know that "tap" was Gujarati for "fever," but I guessed that, having heard of my fever, he was enquiring about it Then he questioned me as to the cause of the fever I told him that I had been exposed to the fierce rays of the sun at Dindigal, and further, at Madura in the place of bread and milk, I had

to partake of Madrasi dishes prepared with chillies as one of its chief ingredients Mahatmaji forbade me to eat Madrasi food again, and as for the sun, he said I must make my body strong enough to bear such hardships Then he continued "If you think it necessary to take rest for a couple of days, you can do so, and you may join me two days hence wherever I may be " I said there was no need for it, as I had shaken of my weakness Once again, he asked me if the constant journey by train was telling upon my nerves, and he was pleased to hear that I did not suffer now as before, and that I was getting used to crowds

Then we had to prepare to go to the public meeting There had been an enormous increase of the floating population in the town on account of Mahatmaji's intended visit. We were told that during the preceding three or four days streams of people from the villages had been pouring into the town, as into some place of pilgrimage, and the whole town was full There was not, however, much noise or bustle for all the crowd Mahatmaji was supremely pleased to witness the perfect order and peace that prevailed In spite of the huge influx of people from the villages they had been admirably drilled to keep order and discipline by the Congress Workers Here was an object lesson as to how easy it was, if we only made some preliminary efforts, to train our masses to accept discipline, and obey orders Mahatmaji referred in his speech in the most eulogistic terms to this example of peace and order at the meeting and declared that he would have no fear of prosecuting his campaign when he should find established throughout the country a spirit of discipline like to what he found here, as part of the national character He declared

that he was far better pleased at seeing this spirit of peace and discipline prevailing among the people here than at having been the recepient of public addresses or of contributions to the Tilak Swaraj Fund Mahatmaji held that wherever there was much shouting and noise and excitement, it must be taken for granted that there the spirit of peaceful non-co-operation had not made much headway. To measure the defence in which the spirit of non-violent non-co-operation had advanced in the country, the test for him would be the degree in which the spinning wheel and the handloom had made their influence felt among the people Such was the peroration of Mahatmaji's speech It was nearly 10 P M when the meeting dispersed and we returned home

Finding that Mahatmaji changed his old dress for a fakir's attire at Madura, Maulana Azad Sobhani also, when he reached Tinnevelly, discarded his old costume, and reduced it to the bare minimum sanctioned by Islam He put on a waist coat in the place of his shirt, put away his cap except during the time of *namaz* (prayer), and substituted a *lungi*,* reaching down to the knees for his pantaloons. He went up to Mahatmaji in the new attire, and explained why he had made the change He said that since Mahatmaji had changed his dress at Madura, he had been giving the matter earnest thought, and as a result had adopted this new attire The Maulana Saheb looked a veritable *fakir*, in his new costume The next morning (24th September) people were coming group after group for Mahatmaji's *darshan*, and the Maulana Saheb in his fakir's dress seated himself at

* A small piece of coloured loin cloth generally worn by Mahomedans

the entrance of our residence, and like a *panda* or priest at some place of pilgrimage, began to call upon every visitor as he came to surrender his foreign clothing His Urdu was, of course, unintelligible to these folk but he did his best to make himself intelligible by means of hints and gestures Most people responding to his call parted with their foreign coats and shirts, and they went to make a regular pile while those who could not resist the fascination of foreign clothing turned and fled at the very sight of what was going on !

Meanwhile, a certain leader of the untouchable community came to meet Mahatmaji, by appointment He explained to Mahatmaji the methods of work he was adopting to uplift the untouchables, and for securing for them their rightful place in Hindu society From his talk it was clear that in the Madras Presidency the untouchables had no right of entry into Hindu temples, and that this was the cause of much heart-burning and much quarrelling The gentleman who had come to interview Mahatmaji was a subject of the Travancore State, and members of his community had not the right of entry into any of the temples there, while members of other communities of equal social position enjoyed that right His community, had, therefore, resolved to make a forcible entry into one of the temples, going in a body during the forthcoming festival. They were, he said, prepared to suffer the penalty which would be imposed upon them by law in case any riot ensued from their action Mahatmaji, while admitting the justice of their claim to enter the temples declared that they would not be justified in attempting to force an entrance in a body

Firstly, they were all sure to be sent to gaol for their offence, and secondly, if they provoked a riot and got vanquished the law against them would remain where it was. But if after all, they felt that they had shaken off the fear of the gaol, then as a matter of conscience they may try peacefully to enter a temple in twos or threes at a time, instead of in a body, and thus go on filling the gaols If that happened, the Travancore Government would feel compelled to revise the State Law in the matter Therefore, assuming that the revision of the law was the sole object they had in view, then that object, Mahatmaji declared, would be far more easily served by the peaceful method he suggested than by the method of open violence which his compatriots were contemplating

The gentleman, now proceeded to make a clean breast of the whole affair Their object, he said, was not merely to secure the right of temple-entry but also to break the existing barriers against inter-dining and inter-marriage imposed by the higher castes These social restrictions, he said, his untouchable brethern had determined no longer to tolerate Mahatmaji did not seem quite pleased to hear all this He explained that the removal of untouchability did not at all carry with it the implication that all restrictions in matters of food and marriage should be removed What he was aiming at was to see that the upper caste Hindus purged themselves of the feeling of repulsion against the touch of a fellow-being and that the untouchable classes received from the Hindu society the respect and dignity which must attach to all human beings, without distinction of class, colour or creed But if under cover of this movement, anybody wanted to destroy the rules and

regulations governing a society in the matter of food and marriage, then he for one would neither extend to him his help or his sympathy

The untouchable interviewer was much surprised to hear all this from Mahatmaji's lips, and so he contended himself with only the remark that in that case untouchability was not removed, but would still remain rampant in society Mahatmaji's reply was as follows —Eating after all was an act of the body it was not an act of such high or holy duty that it required to be done in the presence of people His view was that even a father was not bound to dine with his son Just as bodily acts like answering calls of nature are done privately, so also taking one's food was better done as a private act So also marriage must not be looked at from the view of mere bodily enjoyment it was an act which had as its objective the building up of future generations. License in the matter of marriage was detrimental to the welfare of posterity Therefore, the restrictions on marriage imposed by a society as the result of considerable experience must not be lightly tampered with The gentleman was simply shocked to hear these views He had imagined that, in preaching against untouchability Mahatmaji was after all aiming at the removal of all hard and fast rules in the matter of food and marriage He seemed to have left Mahatmaji dumb-founded

From early morning we were busy with our preparations for departure As the train was to start at 9 we hurried to take our bath, and after taking some light refreshments went off to the station As I had not had any sleep the previous night, I thought I would quietly go to sleep, in the train, and so picked up a convenient corner in

a compartment at some distance from Mahatmaji's. But shortly afterwards, Prabhudas came in anxious search of me and said, "Bapuji has been trying to find you out for such a long while, and you are here, come quick", I could not guess at all what the urgency of the matter might be I came out Mahatmaji was in the waiting room Elbowing my way through the crowd, with great difficulty, I came into his presence He handed to me some papers saying, "You have got to make copies of these papers quickly when do you think you can finish the work" I replied, " I am afraid it won't be possible to copy them when the train is in motion but when the train stops, station after station, I shall do the copying, and I hope to get through the work in the earliest possible time " He nodded assent Then, giving up all thought of sleep, I took paper and pen, and sat waiting for the train to stop at the next station In this way, I went on copying for some four to five minutes' time at each succeeding station, until the whole was finished at 2 P M I took the papers back to him, and he seemed so very pleased

CHAPTER XXVIII

ERODE, COIMBATORE AND SALEM

From Tinnevelly the southernmost extremity of India we were now speeding northwards Reaching Madura at 3 P M we took the Mail train from there, and reached Trichinopoly at 8 P M where changing train again we arrived at Erode at 3-30 A M Mahatmaji's programme was to proceed from Erode to Coimbatore, and thence to Salem, thus completing his tour in the Tamil Nadu

At the Erode station, Mahatmaji was greeted by a vast throng of people who had been keeping awake the whole of the night in expectation of his coming visit His night's rest being essential to Mahatmaji, it had been arranged that his carriage should be detached and put on a siding at some distance from the platform, so that he might pass the rest of the night in it undisturbed When people assembled at the station were told of this, they understood the position, and quickly left

Prabhudas and Jamnadas stayed behind with Mahatmaji, while I, with the other members of the party, repaired to the residence of Mr Ramaswami Naicker, the leading man of the place Performing my morning ablutions early at dawn, I waited in expectation of Mahatmaji He was doing some of his writing work at the station, and it was a little late when he arrived

Among the letters for Mahatmaji delivered at Erode was one from Dr Praphulla Chandra Ray* which, written

* Dr P C Ray the great Chemist of Calcutta, enjoying a European fame

about a month before, after having made a tour of the principal cities of India, at last found its destination here. There was another letter for Mahatmaji it was from a distinguished leader of the Congress Mahatmaji had invited all the principal leaders of India to meet at Bombay on the 4th October to discuss the situation in connection with the Ali Brothers matter The writer while strongly protesting against the step had used language towards Mahatmaji which was harsh and bitter Some of those present with us were inclined to make a laughing matter of the whole thing and wanted to ignore the letter But when it was read out to Mahatmaji, he listened to it with all attention I could not detect even a trace of irritation on his countenance nor did he utter before his own people a word of disapproval of the kind of criticism passed against him On the other hand, it seemed to me that he was feeling keenly within himself the pain which the writer must have felt when penning his letter Nevertheless, without bestowing further thought on the matter, Mahatmaji proceeded to reply to the first letter—Dr Ray's letter Evidently the harshness of the second letter had produced no corresponding reaction on his heart. For how otherwise could he have, the very next moment, penned so affectionate a letter as the one he did to Dr Ray Referring to his first meeting with Dr Ray twenty years back, Mahatmaji wrote it was still fresh in his memory, and he expressed his yearning to meet him again and spend a few hours of most intimate chat with him It was his belief, Mahatmaji wrote, that he had not undergone any material transformation during those twenty years, and it was his hope also that when he met Dr Ray again, he would find him the same Dr Ray he had known him before. The

superscription was "To Dr P C Ray" I reminded Mahatmaji that Dr Ray was then Sir P C Ray, a knight, but his reply was that for him he was still the same Dr Ray

The meeting at Erode took place under a large banyan tree beside a brook The proceedings began with the presentation to Mahatmaji of various kinds of silver caskets with beautiful carvings, made on behalf of the various communities living at Erode They were all sold by auction on the spot, and the proceeds credited to the Tilak Swaraj Fund Mahatmaji's speech at the meeting dealt with the various items at his programme, viz, Khaddar, removal of untouchability, Hindu-Moslem unity, and his gospel of non-violence We lefts Erode for Coimbatore at 2 P M

II

A little before evening Mahatmaji got down two stations before Coimbatore, and left by motor Maulana Azad Sobhani and I accompanied him in his car

The Nilgiri range of hills stands in close proximity to Coimbatore The sun was sinking behind the hills, lighting up the western sky with its crimson rays while the shadows of the hills, were falling over the houses and enveloping the whole valley below Here for the first time we felt the cold of the atmosphere We had to cover some eight to ten miles of countryside to reach the town On the way at a number of places bands of villagers would be coming and greeting Mahatmaji with garlands of flowers, etc Coimbatore produces an abundance of cotton but the ryots as a class having been addicted to drink, there was no end to their sufferings We were told that as the immediate result of Mahatmaji's movement some divine impulse had so possessed their souls that their character had undergone a

miraculous transformation They had now altogether given up their habit of drinking, and the goddess of plenty had returned to their homes And so with hands uplifted in gratitude their women had begun singing the praises of Mahatmaji And though as yet the Charkha was not much in evidence, the conditions favourable to its spread had been revived

Such were the stories of the simple joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears, of the countryfolk which filled our time as we proceeded towards Coimbatore, which we reached as the shades of evening were falling fast As we were motoring to our appointed place of residence we saw in the midst of a wide extended level tract of ground thousands of men gathered around a raised platform and awaiting Mahatmaji's arrival We were given to understand that an address by the local municipality was to be presented here. The people sat so close as to leave no room for Mahatmaji to walk along and reach the platform, and so it became a problem how Mahatmaji was to be taken to his seat Soon the decision was taken that there was nothing else to do but slowly to drive the car through the crowd The result was a terrible commotion and confusion among the people who were gathered near about the car On the other hand the near presence of Mahatmaji so elated their spiritis that they set up a loud chorus of joyous cries, which to us seemed highly unnatural at the time It being utterly impossible to take Mahatmaji to the platfrom through that rush a strong built gentleman, one of the organisers of the meeting, came up dripping with sweat and made repeated offers to Mahatmaji to carry him on his own back on to the platform

But even while he was so speaking, he could not keep his

own ground amidst the pushing and jostling, and he fell down. Mahatmaji stood up and made repeated efforts to calm the crowd, but all in vain. Then with the exclamation, "Now this is horrible, I must get into the crowd", and handing me his bag* and his chadder† he sprang out of the car into the midst of the crowd. It is reported that when at sea the waves are raising high, oil is poured on the seething waters. And there is immediate calm. Something like this happened on this occasion. As soon as the people saw Mahatmaji mixed up in the crowed they instinctively stepped back in all haste to make a passage for him while Mahatmaji himself walking with rapid steps, and looking neither to the right nor to the left made straight for the platform, and took his seat there.

The Municipal address contained high eulogies of Mahatmaji's self-sacrifice, the services rendered by him to India and so on, but it contained also a severe criticism of his programme of the triple boycott of schools and colleges, of courts, and of Councils. As soon as the reading of the address was over, Mahatmaji gave his reply. His first words were words of praise to the members of the Municipality on their very out spoken criticism. He always felt delighted when he saw people speak out their minds without fear. It was his certain conviction that unless the people were able to develop more and more the power of speaking out the truth against all odds, they would never qualify for Swaraj.

This portion of the reply over, Mahatmaji in words

* Ever since discarding his vest at Madura, Mahatmaji kept a small bag in which to carry his papers and other necessary things.

† A piece of cloth loosely thrown over the upper part of the body.

breathing burning conviction said that for him the condemnation of his programme had no value whatsoever, as he knew it had proceeded from a complete misconception of the whole problem It was his certain belief that as long as our activities centred round Government schools, colleges, law-courts and councils, so long the winning of Swaraj must remain a dream That was why he had recommended their boycott in the interests of the country If, indeed, the country was unequal to this modicum of self-sacrifice then it was idle to think of winning Swaraj With these words he concluded his brief reply to the municipal address He rose, and again made his way through the crowd into his car Then the surging crowd surrounding him again took to shouting and cheering at the top of their voice, in the intoxication of joy In a few minutes however we had left the seething mass behind, and soon arrived at the place arranged for us Here we met hundreds of the labouring population of Coimbatore assembled in meeting When Mahatmaji came into their midst they all kept their seats around a raised ornamented dais There was no commotion, nor cries of rejoicing This was a most agreeable surprise to us after our experience of the previous meeting, and it was an object lesson also as to how with some training and organisation beautiful order could be preserved at our public meetings Mahatmaji got through the business of this meeting quite expeditiously and soon left for the public meeting Feeling that I must take some rest, I did not accompany him but stayed behind

The next day (26th September) being Monday, the day of silence, there was no crowd near him, and he was able to take some rest. While at Trichinopoly Mahatmaji had told

me that wherever we might be it would be advisable for me to devote some part of time every day to spinning. In that way, I would through practical experience, he had told me, get to know about the particular merits and defects of the spinning wheels in use in different parts of the country Since then I was doing some spinning work every day, and I noticed also that Mahatmaji himself began to spin daily for at least half an hour On that occasion he had also told me that Mondays were specially suited to be days of spinning. Presently Mahatmaji made it a rule to spin for half an hour before his midday meal, and if he failed to observe the rule on any particular day, he went without his meal that day Only when travelling by train did he make an exception to the rule In this connection I heard him one day to say, "As the world supplies us with our daily food for the support of our body, so we are in duty bound to render back to the world some daily service done by means of bodily labour Everybody can fulfil this duty by working at the spinning wheel for sometime everyday keeping in view the world's good If we draw from the world our daily supply of sustenance for the support of our physical bodies without making some daily return by way of physical labour, it would be tantamount to committing theft

इष्टान् भोगान हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविता: ।
तैर्दत्ता नप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन येव स: ॥

Gita III 12

Ishtan Bhogan'n hi vo 'de'va' Da ' syante' yajnabhavitah' Tairdatha 'naprada 'yaibhyo 'yo' bhunkte' stena e'va sah Gita III. 12

(The Gods, propitiated by 'yajnas' (i. e) sacrifices, grant all your boons He who enjoys these god-given gifts, without making any return is verily thief).

The above verse from the Gita, according to Mahatmaji's interpretation of it, is an authority for his view that we must do some bodily labour by way of service to the world in return for what we receive from it to support our physical bodies And Mahatmaji felt that circumstanced as India was nothing else was more conducive to the welfare of her teeming millions as the spinning wheel From this point of view therefore, regarding spinning as a sacrament, Mahatmaji took to spinning for a half hour at least every day

That was our first Monday since leaving Trichinopoly, and I sat spinning for a long while near Mahatmaji In the meantime since morning, Mahatmaji had been writing an article for *Young India* entitled "Hinduism" This he gave me to read as soon as it was finished The main purpose of the article was to show that untouchability was not an integral part of the Hindu religion But incidentally Mahatmaji touched on many general aspects of Hinduism, and gave himself out as a Sanatani Hindu, (i e ,) a Hindu of the Orthodox school The article gave rise to an under-current of agitation in the anglicised circle or social reformers, as well as in the circle of the Orthodox (Sanatani) Hindus The social reformers protested that although Mahatmaji was an ardent advocate of the removal of untouchability, he had no faith in free social intercourse among peoples in the way of interdining and intermarriage; while, again, he gave offence to some of the orthodox, Sanatani Hindus by placing the Vedas in the same category

with other scriptures like the Bible, the Koran, and the Zend-Avesta Mahatmaji believed that the Bible, the Koran or other Scriptures were as much divinely inspired as the Vedas The root-principles of Mahatmaji's teachings were Ahimsa (non-violence), Brahmacharya (self-restraint and chastity), and Truth, with regard to which there could possibly be no difference of opinion among conflicting sects, nor could any Hindu, who had any proper understanding of Hinduism, question his view that nobody had the right to arrogate to himself the high status of a Guru (spiritual guide), or even of a teacher of religion (Acharya) who had not built up his life on the foundations of self-sacrifice, continence and self control, and undergone a training in bearing hardships For the truths of religion unfold themselves as by a natural law of evolution to one who regulates his daily life in accordance with the ideals of sacrifice, renunciation, Brahmacharya, Ahimsa and Truth So also it must be conceded by every spiritually minded man, that mere intellectual discussions on the doctrines and principles of religion, to the exclusion of such regulation and purification of life might lead to the development of the intellect on the religious side, but would never make a man religious Such being Mahatmaji's views, he declined to be drawn into a disputation in reference to his article on 'Hinduism', for in spite of the many criticisms it provoked, and the many letters of protest which came to him

III

We left Coimbatore on the 26th September at eight in the evening and reached Salem station at 1-30 A M but it was not till 3, that we arrived at our quarters. When I got up in the morning, I found that Mahatmaji had gone out to

attend the public meeting, but had left instructions for me with Jamnadas. The venerable Babu Aswini Kumar Dutt had published for free distribution among the people of Barisal, a leaflet in Bengali under the title, "Non-Co-operation and Ahimsa", explaining his views on the subject, and a copy had been sent by him to Mahatmaji As soon as I awoke from sleep, Jamnadas put it into my hands asking me to prepare an English translation of the same for Mahatmaji Accordingly, I got the translation ready in the course of the morning Returning from the meeting, Mahatmaji looked over the translation and was delighted to know about Aswini Babu's views In concluding his essay, Aswini Babu had quoted a beautiful couplet in Sanskrit from the Vana-parva of the Mahabharata, which was quite appropriate to the then circumstances

Mriduna darunam hanta, mriduna hantyadarunam .
Nasadhyam mriduna kinchit, tasmat tivrataram mridu

(The hard and the soft yield alike to the soft, in fact there is nothing impossible for the soft, hence the soft is more powerful than the hard)

MAHABAKATHA,, Vana II, 8/61

Reading the translation in English, Mahatmaji was so pleased that he asked me to read it out in the original and wrote down the same for himself in Hindi script That was the first time, he said, that he came to know of this couplet, and he spoke in high appreciation of it

Mahatmaji had a heavy programme at Salem, but he made time to pay a visit to Mr Vijiaraghavachariar, the venerable ex-President of the Congress, who was an inhabitant of the town At Salem, a Municipal address was presented to him in a handsome sandalwood casket

Previously to this Mr Rajagoapalachari had brouht this casket to us, and had showed us the beautiful carvings It was originally intended for Lord Willingdon, the Governor of Madras, but the Municipality finally thought it fit to present it to Mahatmaji, so we heared from Mr Rajagopalachari.

We left Salem after evening Dr Varadarajulu Naidu, one of the local leaders, came in the afternoon with his wife and children to pay their respects to Mahatmaji Seeing some gold ornaments worn by his daughter on her arms Mahatmaji asked by way of a joke why she was wearing the ornaments when the Tilak Swaraj Fund collection still remained to be completed As soon as the father explained to the girl in Tamil the nature of Mahatmaji's query, she took off her ornaments without the slightest hesitation and put the same into Mahatmaji's hands At this Mahatmaji said to her again and again that he had been only joking still that little girl of some seven or eight years stoutly refused to take the ornaments back

National workers from the surrounding places came in large numbers to meet Mahatmaji at Salem I heard him saying to one such worker that the time for holding meetings and making speeches was past, and that sort of service to the nation was no longer needed The type of workers he now stood most in need of was such as would have the stamina silently to go on working and working, and would when the occasion arose, and without bitterness in their hearts mount the scaffold In reply to a question from another national worker, Mahatmaji said that for three months that still remained to complete the year, he had no wish to tour outside Guzarat for propaganda work. He would make Guzarat the centre of his activities for those

three months, and if he thought that the time had come for a final reckoning with the Government, he would launch from Guzarat itself his campaign of mass Civil Disobedience for the winning of Swaraj.

CHAPTER XXIX

THROUGH THE ANDHRA COUNTRY

After completing his Tamil Nadu programme, Mahatmaji left Salem for the Ceded Districts on the night of the 27th September His original idea was to spend five days in the Andhra country, but he now thought it necessary to expedite his journey to Bombay. So those five days were reduced to three During these three days, from the 28th to the 30th, therefore we had to spend all our time, night and day, in the train or at the stations. An account of the first of these three days is reproduced below from my diary

Renigunta Junction —28-9-1921 Leaving Salem last night, we are now speeding uninterruptedly northwords, Mahatmaji got down at Tirupati in the morning, with Jamnadas and the Maulana Saheb. There is a celebrated temple at Tirupati which throughout the south country is held in the highest esteem and reverence I heard there were very few temples in all India equally rich. From Tirupati, Mahatmaji will motor to Renigunta where he will meet us From Renigunta we are to proceed to Rajampet at 11-30 A M by special train As it was inconvenient to take our luggage in Mahatmaji's car, Prabhudas and I came down here at Renigunta by train at 9 O'Clock. The last three nights had been passed by us in the train. In the third class the crowd was so great that we could hardly find sitting room for us, and last night, I had to sit bolt upright till three in the morning I was fearing that to day

I might not be able even to move my limbs, but I had the advantage of a short spell of sleep from 4 to 6 in the morning, and I am feeling all right now.

Cuddapah.—The special train left Renigunta at 12 noon, and stopped for a space of 40 minutes at Rajampet, whence it proceeded to Cuddapah, which was reached at 5 p.m. The extra-ordinary rush of people at the Rajampet station will never be obliterated from my memory. It appeared as if they were going to smash the train. We were sitting in our own compartment, but even so we felt that we could not breathe freely. Mahatmaji got down among the seething crowd. The Maulana Saheb followed, elbowing his way. The meeting was held just by the side of the station. Mahatmaji soon returned, but I noticed that the brightness of his countenance had gone. The heated atmosphere of the crowd was too much for him. Yet I could detect no trace of annoyance in his features. The first thing he did when he took his seat in the train, was to take some plantains and oranges, and distribute them with his own hands among the little children there. I saw thousands of outstretched hands eager to receive what they considered to be a *prasad*,* from Mahatmaji. They were, however, disappointed. From among the crowd Mahatmaji singled out only the little children, and to them he gave away the fruits. And when the distribution was over he looked quite refreshed. I could see that he had enjoyed the act, and the colour returned to his face. Then, without taking any further rest, he opened his portfolio, and fell to work.

* Food offered to and partaken of by a deity or some spiritually high person.

"Last night and the whole of to-day were passed in the train Having had no opportunity of taking a bath, my brain has got heated At Cuddapah till 3 in the morning, we passed the time at the station in the waiting room The town is three miles off Mahatmaji went there to attend the public meeting with only the Maulana Saheb as his companion, returning at 10 30 P M Then he lay down on a small cot on the station platform, and asked me to go to bed But there was no sleep for me, and I merely sat reclined in an easy chair There had been at Cuddapah a fairly good collection of money for the Swaraj fund, and I was entrusted by Mahatmaji with its custody The people of this part of the country are very poor, and on our arrival here in the evening the station officials warned us against thieves Being in charge of the money, therefore, sleep was out of the question for me At 12 30 P M a train arrived, and fearing that Mahatmaji might leave his bed under the idea that it was the train for us, I went and took my stand near him Opening his eyes he noticed me, and asked what the matter was I explained that a train had just arrived, but it was not the train by which we should go he closed his eyes again, asking me also to go and lie down. I again went and took to that easy chair, but there was no sleep Then when our train arrived at 3 A.M. we all went and got in The train was so overcrowded that it was with no small difficulty that we could secure a bare sitting space for us "

We reached Tadpatri at 5-30 on the morning of the 29th September, and were there till 1 P M taking train for Kurnool at 2 P. M All these days in the South we had not come across a well-organised body of volunteers

but here at Tadpatri, we saw one such for the first time. The volunteers, of this place were clad in uniform, and had in their hands each a pole of the length of 3½ cubits When they marched with the poles on their shoulders they looked like soldiers carrying rifles Wherever Mahatmaji went, they marched escorting him with the poles on their shoulders Once or twice Mahatmaji just escaped injury to his eyes from a thrust from the poles At the time of our departure from Tadpatri, Maulana Azad Sobani got each one of these volunteers to discard his pole

Our labours were much lightened here at Tadpatri on account of the help from these volunteers I had spent a sleepless night in the train and so on alighting from the train at Tadpatri, I could hardly think, I should be able to do any work after reaching our quarters But the cool morning breeze dissipated all languor and fatigue, and exhilarated my spirits The town is three miles off, and I went all the way in a bullock cart Tadpatri is encircled by hills, on which the clouds rested so close as to make a lovely blending of hill and cloud And the crimson rays of the rising sun penetrating the enveloping clouds fell on the valley below, tinging with a deep-red hue, and the enchanting loveliness of the scene had a most soothing effect on my nerves and my spirits

Mahatmaji and Maulana Azad Sobhani returned from Tadpatri town to the station at 1 P M and we took train again for Kurnool at 2 P M There were meetings at almost every station that we passed At every such station the Maulana Saheb made it a point to call upon the people to surrender the foreign caps they were wearing. Some voluntarily gave them up, while others hesitated, but they

had to hand them over to the volunteers This created considerable commotion among people anxious to keep their caps, and at some places I even noticed people leaving at the very mention of foreign caps At a certain place, the train happened to stop for a while at some distance before reaching the station, when about a dozen people were seen quietly to approach us in expectation of having a sight of Mahatmaji But when the Maulana Saheb stretched out his hands saying, "Brothers, listen!" they all beat a precipitate retreat, taking their caps in their hands Then Maulana Saheb burst out laughing, saying, "So the news had travelled here too!"

In the way of passing the rest of the day, and the whole of the night in the train we reached Kurnool the next morning (30th September) It was a season of draught in those parts, and looking out from the train, the fields looked as though they had never known cultivation We noticed heaps of stones lying at short intervals on the way. The local people gave us to understand that famine striken people were engaged by Government to break these stones and were paid at the rate of 2½ annas a day for men, and 1¼ or 1½ annas for women. But latterly the Congress Committee arranged for spinning work at a daily wage of three annas for both men and women, and so the labouers had in a body left stone-breaking and enthusiastically taken to spinning, which they were allowed by the Committee to do in their own homes Mahatmaji was extremely pleased to hear this news, and from this one concrete instance we were able to realise what invaluable service could be rendered by the spinning wheel in districts wasted by famine.

At Kurnool we were the guests of a certain wealthy Hindu merchant. Our host had arranged for the performance of some Vedic ceremony to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Mahatmaji's visit, and sacred water, corn, etc., were sprinkled on Mahatmaji's body to the accompaniment of Vedic Chants. Another Hindu merchant celebrated this visit by making a handsome present of money, making a display of the same by arranging the silver coins in rows. The whole amount was immediately credited to the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Kurnool boasts of a Muslim indigenous seat of learning which although established long ago is still in a flourishing condition The Maulvis who have been educated here are honoured by Mussalman society everywhere in the South The present head of the Madrassah, by virtue of his selflessness and noble dignity of character is accorded the high honour due to a Pir * Indeed the serenity of his countenance, and the magnanimity of his character could not but attract people to him Mahatmaji paid a brief visit to the school, and made the acquaintance of the boys Then followed the public meeting on the broad bed of a large river Bengali readers might smile incredulously at hearing of a meeting held on a river bed, but in that season rivers in that part of the country were wholly without water, and as far as the eye could reach on either side, there was nothing visible but an ever expanding sandy waste At Kurnool the public could not have Mahatmaji with them except for a few short hours, but they made the most of this brief stay. They crowded round him, and thousands of people kept running after his carriage wherever he had occasion to go. The tread of these thousands of people made such a volume

* A 'Pir' A Mahomedan Saint

of sound that it could be heard from afar Thus seated in an open car with people closely following him, the scene reminded me irresistively of the Biblical parable of the "Shepherd and his Folk"

CHAPTER XXX

RUMOURS OF ARREST

Our original idea was to motor to Bellary from Kurnool, but seeing that not more than one car could be secured, it was finally settled that we should go by train. Bellary being situated on the western extremity of the Andhra country, it was continuous with Karnatak, and the Congress Provincial Committees of the Andhra and the Karnatak both claimed jurisdiction over it An arbitration Board had been appointed by the Congress to settle the dispute Telugu and Kanarese both were the spoken language of the Bellary district In point of numbers the Telugu-speaking population probably formed the majority, but the Kanarese-speaking minority represented the dominant section, and the problem had thus got complicated A similar boundary dispute had been pending between the Andhra and the Orissa Provinces, the latter claiming for itself Berhampore, in the Ganjam district Mahatmaji, when he came to hear of this from Mr Konda Venkatappayya, the head of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, said to him, "My heart bleeds for Orissa she is the most afflicted of our provinces she is the poorest I can undergo any amonut of suffering for her sake What Orissa desires, she must have, and there should be no contention over it" Mr. Venkatappayya signifying his assent, it was resolved to intimate the decision to Mr. Prakasam, who had been nominated an arbitrator by the Andhra Committee.

Arriving at Guntakal Junction we heard that from

5 P M a huge gathering was awaiting Mahatmaji's arrival at Bellary It was past eleven at night when we arrived there. There was a tremendous rush of people at the station, and the night was dark Alighting from the train in the dark, we lost our bearings, and could not make out which way to turn. Mahatmaji got down and proceeded direct to the public meeting followed by all that vast congregation When the crowd had thinned away, our wits returned, and we walked to the waiting room for shelter for the night

From the meeting Mahatmaji returned straight to the station It was then 1 30 A M He ordered his bedding to be spread on the floor of the open platform I did not go to sleep, but sat by him keeping guard So also were there so many other passengers lying on the platform all sleeping. There among the motley crowd Mahatmaji was sleeping on the bare platform in the most unconcerned manner like any ordinary passenger and this set me athinking I thought of his great name, power and fame throughout the country and said to myself, "He who was being regarded by the people as the virtual dictator of all India, who was being received everywhere even as an Emperor, and whose praises were being sung in frenzied strains by a thousand mouths, from the highest to the lowest, in the country, irrespective of age or sex,—could he have gone to sleep like this, if indeed name, power and fame had made the slightest impression on his heart? By what divine strength has he succeeded in neutralising the intoxicating effects of the unexampled prestige and power which he commanded? In order to be able to swallow unscathed the poison of riches, honour, fame and authority, the unemancipated man must be ever like Shiva himself, who had swallowed up the terrible

poison, and so became the "blue-throated-God"* Looking deep into my own impure heart, I now pictured to myself something of the degree of heart's purity required to enable a man to cast off the intoxication of fame and power and realise one's oneness with the world around and then with the added sense thus gained by me of the rare nobility, simplicity, and grandeur of Mahatmaji's character, I now prostrated myself mentally before him again and again

While it was still dark, Mahatmaji woke up and got ready to leave Bellary At 5 A M the train arrived and we all got into it Then the local leaders came from the town with the news that a warrant of arrest had been issued by the Government of Madras against Mahatmaji for his Trichinopoly speech, and that he was to be arrested on his return to Guntakal On all of us, more or less, the report had a depressing effect, but Mahatmaji rejoiced over it exceedingly. I questioned one of our informants as to the truth of the report He replied that they had obtained quite reliable information, and that both the District Magistrate and the Police Superintendent were with us in that very train, proceeding to Guntakal for the purpose of the arrest.

The train started The noble-minded Mr Venkatappayya, who was with us, asked Mahatmaji what, in the event of his arrest, was to be done at the meeting of all the Provincial leaders to be held at Bombay on the 4th October In reply, Mahatmaji advised him to go to Bombay and give full details of his arrest before the leaders, and then went on to say,--"Now there is only one work before the country, namely, the production and distribution of Khaddar. There is no need for anything else, nor would it be

* Such is the story according to Hindu mythology.

desirable to fritter away our energies over anything else If we could but give ourselves up wholly to the work of Khaddar, then the whole of our object will be achieved." Maulana Azad Sobhani next enquired as to what he should do. Mahatmaji smilingly said,—"Your duty will be to go about the country taking foreign caps from people who would be still wearing them " He entrusted Mr Venkatappayya and Mr. Harisarvothama Rao with the work of popularising Khaddar When Mahatmaji had left for a wash, Jamnadas, who was in another compartment came in, and when he heard of the rumour about Mahatmaji's arrest, with an emphatic gesture of his right hand, he exclaimed, "Be it so, I don't mind I must accompany Bapuji into the prison. I will say that Bapu* is an invalid, and he must have an attendant to look after him, in which case, I am sure, I shall be permitted to be by his side' And so he requested Mr Venkatappayya to see that both Prabhudas and I reached Bombay in safety Thus each one among us had his duties cut out for him Then when Mahatmaji returned from the wash, he told Jamnadas that the *Navajivan* § should continue to be published as usual but that *Young India* must be stopped Seeing that he was now speaking his last words of instruction to us all, I wanted to know what I should do in the circumstances I put the question through Jamnadas Mahatmaji looking at me said as follows —"If the Government should at all allow me an attendant, then you only would come with me to gaol, but I am not going to make any request of the sort A request like that would be beyond me. In case no attendant

* In Gujarati 'Bapu' means Father.

§ The Gujarati Weekly edited by Mahatma Gandhi.

is allowed, then you will proceed to the Ashram at Sabarmati and fix yourself up there If you don't feel at home at Ashram you will go back to Mr Mukerji, your teacher at Benares Our leave-taking being thus over, we waited in anxious expectation of the final act Then, in order to divert us from the sad thought pressing heavily upon our minds, Maulana Azad Sobhani presented us with a riddle to solve —"Prove that Non-violent Non-Co operation will lead to Swaraj" The friend to whom the question was particularly addressed, being unable on the spur of the moment to think of a proper answer resorted to the logical trick of trying to turn the tables on the opponent by a counter question. At this the Maulana Saheb exclaimed—"Hallo! It is I who have put you a question, and it is I who must answer it! Quite logical indeed! Now do confess yourself beaten!'—and then Maulana Saheb with a wave of his hand in recognition of his having scored a victory, burst out laughing Mahatmaji who was closely watching this intellectual duel, was amused at this want of readiness on that part of one of his principal followers to answer such a simple question as that. By his sagacity and foresight the Maulana Saheb had even then been able to envisage what would prove to be the question of the hour directly Mahatmaji had disappeared from the field of politics behind prison walls The full significance of the question, however, did not strike me then as it had done since While all this loving quarrel and talk was going on the train was nearing Guntakal station Mahatmaji with a sudden jerk of his body got up full of energy and full of cheer while the rest of us were anxiously looking out of our windows of the compartment to catch a sight of the

display of troops in uniform on the platform. Nothing was to be seen however, except that two red-turbaned policemen were listlessly strolling about on the platform. At this unable to contain myself, I burst in sheer joy— 'All bosh", and Mahatmaji also responded with a smile Meanwhile, the Bombay Mail had arrived, and was waiting on the other side of the platform ready to start. So we hurried with our luggage and quickly got into it, leaving Guntakal at 8 A.M. on the 1st October, 1921.

PART II

CHAPTER I

RETURN TO BOMBAY

At 8 A. M., on the first October, we took the Bombay Mail from Guntakal. Passing through Raichur, Wadi, Sholapur, and other big stations on our way, we reached Poona at three the next morning. Mr. N. C. Kelkar, the well-known leader of Poona, came to the station to meet Mahatmaji. From Poona we reached Bombay at 8 A. M. As we were nearing Bombay, Prabhudas told me that we were now approaching the very centre of the whole movement. He told me also that the white Khaddar cap, the external symbol of the N. C. O. Movement was nowhere more in evidence than at Bombay. At Mahatmaji's meetings at Bombay, he said, lakhs of people would assemble all wearing the white Gandhi cap on their heads, and then a wonderful sight would present itself. It would look as though the sea-wave had left the sea, and towering high raged and foamed like a huge sea serpent with its white thousand-hooded head. As I sat listening to Prabhudas's enthusiastic eulogy of Bombay City and its greatness, I could not help feeling for the moment that to the eye of love there was nothing in the beloved which would not appear great and good.

As the train reached the Borro Bunder Station (Bombay), a group of Khaddar clad volunteers met Mahatmaji to escort him from the train. Mahatmaji's first

care was to arrange for Maulana Saheb's departure for the Khilafat office, after which he proceeded to the residence of Mr Revashankar Jagjivan Jhawry in Laburnum Road Mr Revashankar was considerably older than Mahatmaji, and by profession was a jeweller He had not received an English education, but a true jeweller that he was, he had not failed to pick out a true human jewel in Mahatmaji How else was it possible for him to throw himself heart and soul into Mahatmaji's service? Mahatmaji on his part honoured him as an elder brother, and invariably sought his hospitality whenever he had occasion to come to Bombay

This was Mahatmaji's first visit to Bombay in fakir's attire Leaving Bombay just two months ago, he had toured as far as Aligarh on the north-west, Dibrugarh on the east, Tinnevelly on the south, and so having made an almost complete circuit of the sub-continent had come back to Bombay on the second day of October His was a sort of triumphal progress, which had flooded the country with a degree of enthusiasm unknown before A year since at Calcutta, standing before the representatives of the whole of India in Congress assembled, and expounding to them his doctrine of Non-co-operation, he had proclaimed in solemn accents that, if the programme of work laid down by him for the country was truly carried out, and if the spirit of peace and calm could be preserved throughout the land then the winning of Swaraj within the space of a twelve month was a certainty Since that momentous pronouncement a whole year had passed and consequently the eyes of all India were now turned towards him Then again his chief associates, the Ali Brothers, had been

arrested, and were being prosecuted at Karachi Lastly, the progress of the Khaddar movement having fallen far short of his hopes, Mahatmaji had discarded his customary dress and put on the mendicant's garb As the result of these concurring events popular hopes and expectations, and the excitement and restlessness in the country had been rising higher and higher, and when it became known that Mahatmaji had returned to Bombay, people began to flock to have a sight of him in his new garb

Here at Bombay I met for the first time some of Mahatmaji's principal associates As all of them were in a special sense Mahatmaji's co-adjutors, and were closely connected in various ways with many later events, I think it would be best to introduce them here to my readers Soon after our arrival, a gentleman some thirty-five years of age came, and greeted Prabhudas and Jamnadas, with many friendly enquiries as to their health, etc He had a peculiar way of smiling, it was through his eyes, for it seemed to me that his heart had its seat in his eyes The slightest alterations of feeling, whether of approbation or disapprobation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, were mirrored in his eyes, like the interplay of light and darkness, or of sun and rain He had, therefore, not to waste many words to give us an insight into what passed within him I learnt from Prabhudas that the gentleman in question was no other than Mr Shankerlal Banker, the then Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee

In his company came a certain fair lady, who was, however, trying her best to suppress her joy at Mahatmaji's return, but an occasional word or two betrayed her. It seemed as if she was getting somewhat distracted under the

stress of conflicting emotions as to whether she should put the reins on her feelings, or let go herself. Then another lady, who was standing near her, tried to rouse her from her abstraction, calling out to her,—"Anasuya! Anasuya!" I could then make out that she was no less a person than Miss Anasuya Ben, the well known Labour leader of Ahmedabad

She who called Miss Anasuya Ben by her name seemed to have copied the ladies of Bombay almost in every detail, in her dress, her outward bearing and gait, etc, but still I thought I saw that she carried about her person something of the atmosphere of my native Bengal The soil of Bengal is fertile, and her green loveliness charms and fascinates the eye In addition, Nature, with lavish hands, has endowed her and has built up her individuality by investing her with the qualities of softness, sensibility and changefulness All these distinctive features of Bengali character, I thought, I saw mirrored in her countenance Having now toured the other provinces of India, I had be become all the more clear in my mind as to these vital elements of Bengali character, and I had not much difficulty therefore to make out that this lady was Mrs Sarojini Naidu By the spontaneous flow of her English as well as by her skilled command of language breathing poetic fervour, she astonished and charmed her audience Mahamaji humorously called her by the name of 'Bulbul,' the Indian Nightingale.

There were also two other gentlemen here to whom Prabhudas and Jamnadas showed great deference One of them, I learnt was the great leader of Guzarat, Mr Vallabbhai Patel, but he was so grave-look-

ing, and spoke so little, that I could hardly realise how he had managed to rise to the position of a leader of such eminence The political life of Guzarat was then being silently moulded and built up under the dominating influence of Mahatmaji and in the circumstance it was no wonder that silent workers like Mr Patel should have come to win for themselves a high position in the political circles of that Province Such men would never have attained to position of leadership in provinces where political work began and ended in speech-making His companion, I was told was Mr Lakshmidas, the organiser of Khaddar work in Guzarat This gentleman was so plain and unostentatious looking that he went about with no vest on, and had only an ordinary towel thrown over his body It was not easy, therefore, at the outset for outsiders to discover for themselves what an efficient worker he was, or how great his parts were

Bombay being the very centre of Mahatmaji s activities, I found that there were a whole host of people attached to him and anxious to serve him He spoke to almost all of them in his mother-tongue, the Guzarati and mixed with them on easy and familiar terms No longer did I find him speak with such slow deliberation, as I had heard him speak before in English or Hindi People would be pouring in, group after group, and putting him question after question, while he on his part would engage himself in frank and earnest discussions with them all I could not understand a word of Guzarati, and therefore, although surrounded by people, I was feeling lonely, and was left to the resources of my own mind to occupy myself with as best as I might. Besides, being a new man I felt shy, and could not come

near Mahatmaji's presence without some little internal struggle He, however, would send for me, and keep me engaged in some kind of work or other Thus the whole of the day in question up till eight in the evening Mahatmaji was occupied in the manner described, and then he went out, returning home I did not know when, for I had already fallen asleep

The next day (3rd October) was Monday, and he was under his vow of silence There were no people with him now, and alone I sat by his side, keeping guard Once at midday Jamnadas came with certain telegrams to Mahatmaji, and then left when he had got the answers In the morning Principal Dhruva of the Benares Hindu University called on him, and had a lengthy talk with him in Guzarati Mahatmaji wrote down his own questions, as also the answers to Mr Dhruva's questions. From the tenor of Principal Dhruva's talk, I could gather that Pandit Malaviyaji was as much exercised over the possible fate of his Benares Hindu University as Sir Asutosh Mukerji, the then Vice-Chancellor, was over the future of the Calcutta University, which was then being boycotted in increasing numbers by its students I got the impression that, having regard to the circumstances, Principal Dhruva was pressing Mahatmaji to devise a scheme of national education such as would be satisfactory from every point of view. I could not make out whether the request was made on behalf of Pandit Malaviyaji or not

Throughout the day Mahatmaji was busy writing for the *Navajivan*.* Then at 9 P M, he abruptly left his room, and went up alone to the terrace He returned

* The Guzarati weekly edited by Mahatma Gandhi

some 15 or 20 minutes after, and straightway began composing something with all speed All this while I sat by his side, and when he had finished, he wrote to me, on a bit of paper, "Make as many copies as possible in large hand, keeping double space, on foolscap paper, if we have any." Providing myself with some paper, and sitting near Mahatmaji, I began copying Then, he again wrote to me, "Tell Prabhudas to make my bed" When the bed was ready, he at once took to it It was then 9-30 P M Feeling that if I went on with my work in the same room, Mahatmaji's rest might be disturbed on account of the light, I came back to my own room, and did as many as eight copies by 12 O'clock midnight

The next morning Mahatmaji got up very early while it was still dark, and went out for a wash I had gone into his room and was engaged in pinning up each copy separately when he returned and asked me how many copies I had done Learning from me that I had made eight copies, he said, "You did all the eight copies overnight? I wanted to tell you that three copies only would have done, but now that I have eight copies it would be all the better for my purpose"

CHAPTER II

BEGINNINGS OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

It was Tuesday, the 4th of October. Leaders from the different provinces had assembled in meeting at Bombay in response to Mahatmaji's invitation. Mahatmaji had made up his mind to publish a manifesto over the signatures of all these leaders. I have described in the previous chapter the circumstances under which that manifesto was composed. Though it was prepared at such short notice yet its method was so perfect that it was a delight to read it. Mahatmaji was now expecting to get all the leading men of India in a body to commit, regardless of the frowns of the Government, the identical offence for which the Ali Brothers had been arrested. In the draft manifesto it was stated that it was the inherent right of every Indian to express his opinion with full freedom about the propriety or otherwise of citizens offering their services to or continuing to remain in the employ of, the Government, whether in the civil or the military department. The manifesto then declared that, in the present circumstances of the country, it was wrong not only for Mussalmans, but for every Indian, of whatever persuasion, to serve in the Army or any other Administrative Department of Government. And it ended with an appeal to every Government servant to resign his place and take to the production and propagation of Khaddar with a view to earn his living.

Since the morning, news had begun to pour in of the arrival of the leaders from the different provinces. The

Northern contingent was made up of Lala Lajpat Rai from the Punjab, Hakim Saheb and Dr Ansari from Delhi, Pandit Motilalji, Maulana Abdul Bari, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, Pandit Jawharlalji and Mr Mahadev Desai from the United Provinces, Mr Rajendra Prasad from Behar, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Mr Shyamsundar Chakravarty, and Mr Jitendralal Banerji from Bengal From the South came Mr Rajagopalachariar of Tamil country (Madras Presidency), Mr Venkatappayya of the Andhra country (Madras Presidency) Mr Deshpande of the Karnatak, and Mr. Kelkar of Poona, as well as other Maharashtra leaders Although the meeting was arranged for 3 in the afternoon, still from the morning many of the leaders had been coming to Mahatmaji for consultation, to some of whom Mahatmaji gave copies of his draft manifesto

Mr Chotani the millionaire merchant of Bombay, and the then President of the Khilafat Committee, had just returned from Europe He called on Mahatmaji with Mr Mushir Hussain Kidwai and Maulana Hasrat Mohani, and was anxious that Mahatmaji should convert his two friends to Mahatmaji's way of thinking The whole movement was so much love's labour lost —such was Mr Kidwai's opinion He had a peculiar roundabout way of expressing himself By character Maulana Hasrat Mohani seemed to me like a solid mass of moving rock

It appeared as though those who would come in collision with him were bound to go to pieces under the shock of impact His steady look and the metallic ring of his voice, bore witness to the solidity of his character, and the rare quality of holding on to his conviction at all hazards The Maulana when he heard Mr

Chotani making his request, said to Mahatmaji, "No, no, I am not opposed to your views, only I do not think that we ought to lay so much stress on Khaddar In my view Indian mill-made cloth is equally Swadeshi "

Maulana Abdul Bari Saheb had come from Lucknow He looked like a molten ball of iron His influence over the Mussalman community was unbounded Seeing Mahatmaji wearing his loin cloth, which did not reach up to his knees, the Maulana said "We have all to come and see you, but it is against our scripture to keep the knees bare in this fashion', at which Mahatmaji hurriedly covered up his legs with the piece of loose cloth that he had to cover the upper part of his body, and laughed and said, "Now it is all right, I suppose "

Pandit Jawharlalji was sitting quietly by the side of Mahatmaji, reading that day's *Bombay Chronicle* Seeing Mahatmaji mentioned as " Mahatma Gandhi " in an Assam Government Communique, he said with a laugh, " This is perhaps the first time that a Government Communique calls him a Mahatma "

In the meantime a certain turbaned Sadhu wearing ochre-dyed clothes had come self-invited to see Mahatmaji, believing himself to have been inspired with a special message for Mahatmaji Since morning he had been waiting and waiting unable with all his efforts to catch Mahatmaji's eye, for Mahatmaji was wholly absorbed in consultation with the leaders Finding his case hopeless, he at last sought the help of Mr Chotani, who, a good-natured gentleman that he was, found it perhaps difficult, specially in those days of Hindu-Moslem entente, to disregard a man dressed as a Sadhu But Mahatmaji came to his rescue and

sternly rebuked the Sadhu, saying,—"How dare you be so rude as to waste the precious time of Mr Chotani"? This saved Chotani Mian From this incident I could see that Mahatmaji, despite his habitual gentleness of manner, was not the man to put up with any kind of rude or foolish meddlesomeness

The Leaders' Conference met at 3 P M The original proposal was that it should meet in Mahatmaji's room, but fearing that his room might not be spacious enough, a separate place had been secured by the side of the Chowpathy Road near Mr Shankerlal Banker's residence It was only about five minutes' walk from Mahatmaji's lodging A little before the appointed hour, Mahatmaji walked to the place with Mrs Naidu, and some eight or nine others I too followed Seeing Mahatmaji coming to the meeting with his body bare (but for a small bit of cloth round his loins), while holding a bag in his hand, the old Abbas Tyebji Saheb of Baroda burst out laughing and clapping his hands jestingly, said—"See Mahatmaji has turned mad, but not merely that, he has devised a new way of making others mad also" In response Mahatmaji also laughed most heartily

When the meeting began, it fell to me to keep guard at the entrance It was not a public meeting, and none but those who were well known to us, or had been invited, were to be allowed to enter Manatmaji sat in the centre, and on his right were all the Mussalman leaders sitting on their heels in Durbari-fashion This lent an additional dignity to the scene The Muslim gentry seem to have preserved intact the customs and traditions of the olden days of Muslim rule, but the Hindus have no recognised conven-

tion as to how to sit when assembled in meeting. Mrs Naidu, Pandit Motilalji and other Hindu leaders took their seats to the left of Mahatmaji Mahatmaji first read out the English draft of his manifesto to the audience, and then gave an Urdu translation thereof Then the discussion began The Mussalman leaders mostly kept silent, nor did those also who were Mahatmaji's immediate followers in the Non-co-operation Movement make any criticisms I had an impression from what I had read in the Press that Lala Lajpat Rai was not much in sympathy with Mahatmaji's views, but here it seemed to me that he had undergone a complete change But the Maharashtra leaders kept on raising objection after objection almost to every word and line of the draft The very mention of the spinning-wheel, the handloom and Khaddar raised quite a storm of opposition from them Mr Vithalbhai Patel, Mr. Kelkar, Mr Jayakar and Dr Moonji were the severest of the critics Mr Rajagopalachari of Madras argued for a while in support of Mahatmaji His was a keen intellect, and he was very clever in refuting the arguments of his opponents Lalaji and Motilalji tried to weigh both sides and arrive at a compromise between the contending points of view This was my first experience of the proceedings of a "Committee meeting" of leaders, and I was rather alarmed at the parade of hair-splitting argumentation Here for the first time, I came to realise under what difficulties Mahatmaji had to get his work done, and the discovery pained me I could very well understand that in ordinary circumstances at a gathering of leading exponents of divergent views, keen debates like this would be quite in their place But here, Mahatmaji was about to take his

plunge and engage in a terrible struggle with the Government At such a time as this, the sort of the debate I witnessed hardly appealed to me He could, of course, have gained his point by the sheer weight of his majority, and it was a revelation to me to note with what patience, courtesy and consideration Mahatmaji would listen to the arguments, however subtle, put forward by the other side

As a result of the discussion, the language of the statement was considerably modified, but the substance remained much the same There was, however, one important modification In the original draft those who would leave Government service were asked to turn to the spinning-wheel and Khaddar, but in the final draft they were advised merely to take to such means of earning their livelihood, as would be consistent with their self-respect I felt that much of the art and beauty of the original draft was lost in the process of dissection to which it had been subjected Some time before sunset I had been once to our lodging to bring Mahatmaji his meal On my return I found that Mr Mahadev Desai had made a fair copy of the revised statement and placed it before Mahatmaji He first affixed his signature to it, the other leaders followed, and it was not till seven that all the signatures had been taken * I was feeling very tired, and so I left the place of Conference and returned to our quarters

It was 9-30 P M when Mahatmaji came back from the Conference I heard that a rumour was circulating that Mahatmaji was going to be arrested that very night on a

* For the full text of the "Leaders' Manifesto" and the names of the signatories, see Appendix

charge of inciting soldiers and the police to leave Government service, and that was why he had been discussing matters till that late hour with the leaders, explaining to them the lines on which, in the event of his arrest, the movement had to be conducted. As I was the only person who passed the night in Mahatmaji's room, Jamnadas told me again and again that I must make sure that Mahatmaji was not taken away privately, and that if the police did actually turn up, I must not fail to rouse the whole house.

When Mahatmaji returned, he looked very much tired, and he instantly laid himself down on his bed. The weather being too warm, he asked me to fan him, but a few minutes after, all on a sudden he exclaimed—"Write." I at once brought pen and paper, and sat down to write. He dictated to me the Resolutions that he proposed to bring before the Working Committee. The reference to the spinning wheel, the handloom and Khaddar had been deleted from the Leaders' Manifesto, but here in the Working Committee's Resolution Mahatmaji inserted it. This draft Resolution stated that those who would leave the army or the police should after undergoing a short course of training be able to earn an honourable living by handspinning and handweaving. Further, it was stated that *the Khaddar Propaganda had fallen far short of the* Committee's expectations, and that an All-India campaign of Civil Disobedience was not possible so long as the boycott of foreign cloth had not been completed, and every district and every Province had not become self-contained in the matter of Khaddar-production. Then another Resolution stated that there should be a general voluntary hartal throughout India on the day of the landing of the Prince of

Wales in India At eleven in the night Mr. Jairamdas of Sindh came to see Mahatmaji Mahatmaji then asked me to resume fanning, while Mr. Jairamdas went on writing to Mahatmaji's dictation When all the draft Resolutions of the Working Committee had been taken down, Mr Jairamdas suggested that in view of the rumours of his arrest that very night, Mahatmaji would be well advised to tell the people the manner in which the work of the movement was to proceed during his absence Accordingly, Mahatmaji dictated a message under the title "In the Event of My Arrest," which was to be published in the *Bombay Chronicle.* It was 11-40 P.M when the writing was finished In the meantime, Mr Mahadev had gone to wire the "Leaders' Manifesto" all over the country, and also to deliver a copy to the *Bombay Chronicle* office for publication It was then midnight, but Mr Mahadev had not returned; so Mahatmaji felt a little surprised Mr Jairamdas wondered if Mr Desai had not been arrested on the way with the Manifesto in his hand After midnight Mr Jairamdas left us, and Mahatmaji also was about to retire At 12-30 a messenger from the *Bombay Chronicle* office came in Scarcely had I dismissed him and put out the light and gone to bed when Mr Mahadev returned and knocked at the door Mahatmaji immediately summoned him, and questioned him in Guzarati on many matters I could not follow the talk but I could gather that Mr Mahadev had done his work most creditably, and I quite realised that if he could be always by Mahatmaji's side he would be a great help to him in every matter

On the publication of the Manifesto in the *Bombay*

Chronicle next morning a great wave of excitement and enthusiasm passed through the city The news at once spread among the general body of people that forty of the most distinguished leaders of India had individually taken upon themselves the responsibility of calling upon all Government servants, including the soldiers and police, to resign their posts under Government Mrs Sarojini Naidu came in the morning and intimated to Mahatmaji that even the English residents in the city were astonished and alarmed At the Taj Mahal Hotel, where she had been staying, several European boarders had come and said to her, "What do you mean ? Are you really serious ?"

At 12 noon the Working Committee met, and all the proposals of Mahatmaji were accepted The same day almost all the leaders left for their respective provinces Mahatmaji enjoined upon them all that their primary duty should be to maintain peace and order in the country and spread Khaddar The same day evening (5th October), Mahatmaji also left for his Ashram

CHAPTER III

HARD AS ADAMANT

A very large crowd had assembled at the Colaba station (Bombay) to see Mahatmaji off Everybody had his white Khaddar cap on, yet nobody would care to keep the peace. It was time for the train to start; and yet, owing to the terrible rush and confusion, we could not put our luggage in the train Jamnadas, who was directing the work, got excited, and shouting at the top of his voice, began to scold the people, but got no hearing. Unable to understand a word of Guzarati, I could only distinguish the single syllable "chhe, chhe, chhe, chhe," in every mouth. Surrounded by the crowd, it was very difficult for me to get in, but I had my opportunity and slipped into the train. Seeing that no luggage of ours could be carried to the train, Mahatmaji stood at the entrance of his compartment, and so far as I could see he gently reproved the crowd for the "tyranny" of their affection On the instant the noise and hubbub ceased Then in all hurry we took hold of our luggage and put it in the train, which left within a few seconds

In the train we were a large party including Mr Rajagopalachary, Miss Anasuya Ben and others Anasuya Ben was in the same compartment with Mahatmaji When once I happened to be there on some business, she enquired of Mahatmaji about me In Mahatmaji's reply I could only distinguish the word *Vaishnava*, and I thought that probably Mahatmaji had taken me for a *Vaishnava*

Returning to my compartment, I took my seat by the side of Mr Rajagopalachary Mr Achariar began discussing with me Mahatmaji's article on "Hinduism" in *Young India* He pointed out to me that Mahatmaji had passed a verdict of severe condemnation on Untouchability and yet had set his face against inter-dining and inter-marriage Rajagopalachariji went on arguing whether these two positions could at all be reconciled with each other When we reached the Ashram, he questioned Mahatmaji on this very point Mahatmaji's answer was that as a believer in the Law of Karma he was not in favour of going against the time-honoured rules in regard to marriage, food, etc prevailing in Hindu Society But he had declared war against untouchability simply because in the name of untouchability the lowest classes were being subjected to great oppression, and even denied the elementary rights of human beings, which denial constituted in his opinion an offence against religion itself

At Bombay we had had to bid good-bye to Prabhudas Mahatmaji had directed him to go and work in the Ashram at Wardha* I was much pained to notice how castdown he was when we left him Then, as I was conversing with Mr Rajagopalachary, Jamnadas came from Mahatmaji in an excited mood and said "My death-warrant is signed" We enquired what the matter was and heard that it was Mahatmaji's intention to send him to Rajkot† to do hand-spinning and hand-weaving work there For Jamnadas it

* In Central Provinces where Seth Jamnalalji had started an Ashram on the lines of the Ashram at Sabarmati.

† Rajkot is in Kathiawad in Guzarat where Mahatmaji had passed his early years and had an ancestral dwelling house.

was indeed a cruel stroke of fortune and as good as a death-warrant, since he had to leave Mahatmaji at once So also at the time Mr. Mahadev Desai, Mahatmaji's devoted disciple and associate, was at Allahabad working for the *Independent* newspaper He could not bear to be away from Mahatmaji for long; but when Mahatmaji had once made up his mind as to where any of his followers should go to work and what that work should be, there was no way of getting him agree to the contrary One day after the evening prayers at the Ashram, I noticed that some three or four important persons, all devoted to Mahatmaji, were moving heaven and earth to make him agree to a proposal of theirs, but Mahatmaji was adamant Then I discovered that, however soft and gentle Mahatmaji might otherwise appear to be, by nature he was very unyielding After closely listening to all that those gentlemen had to say, Mahatmaji dismissed their case with the laconic answer,— "I do not at all understand what you really mean " Various little incidents of this kind impressed upon me the conviction that by no amount of pressure, whether by way of entreaty or inducement, could you expect to exploit him for your purposes

All this I mention with a view to bring out one vital fact of his character He was so constituted by nature that by no amount of submissiveness or devotedness of service could you exercise any sort of personal influence on him. The general rule is that people have got to do many things merely because they feel drawn to or are dependent upon others in respect of something or other Thus in the case of some, ties of blood are an important factor which makes them unable to assert themselves, while again there are

others who are won over by smooth words and the application of a judicious dose of flattery. But in the case of Mahatmaji, it was clear that the moment he had decided on a course that he considered to be right and proper, he would pursue it, to the end, without at all minding whether by so doing he had to act contrary to the wishes and request and even the ardent desires of his own people engaged in rendering unstinted personal service to him, or of those who were his devoted followers and adherents Thus he would not allow his intellect or his judgment to be clouded by love or passion getting the better of him I had heard from his own lips that on one occasion there was a sharp conflict of views between his wife and himself on the question of untouchability, and then he had felt compelled to ask her to leave the Ashram and live elsewhere to please herself This single incident is enough to show how stern and unbending Mahatmaji could be where the interests of Truth and Justice were at stake

CHAPTER IV

THE ASHRAM AT SABARMATI

The Guzarat Mail reached Ahmedabad at 8 A M on the 6th October Beyond Ahmedabad, is the Sabarmati station, whence the Ashram is but a mile off But the Mail train does not stop at Sabarmati, so we had to get down at Ahmedabad, from where the Ashram is some four miles distant

Ahmedabad is noted for its cotton mills The ascendency of machinery in the life of the city is visible everywhere it has entered, so to say, into its very bone and marrow By this constant contact with machinery and iron and steel, the external features and the internal temper of the city have undergone a strange transformation, and become as hard and dry and lifeless as iron itself

The public of Ahmedabad were now filled with joy and enthusiasm like what people feel when their own King returns home like a conquering hero from a foreign expedition, and they had gathered in their thousands to accord a warm welcome to Mahatmaji Alighting from the train he took Mr Rajagopalachary with him, and went straight to the Ashram Then when the huge crowd had thinned away, we put all our luggage in a motor lorry and left.

Advancing a little distance we reached the river, Sabarmati. Crossing her by a metalled bridge, we reached the other bank, whence runs a road parallel to the river, leading due north to the Sabarmati station After the traveller had gone some three miles along that road the

sight of an open field dotted over with a number of newly built houses would suddenly arrest his eye This is the celebrated Satyagraha ashram of Sabarmati. It stands on either side of the public road covering a total of a hundred and fifty acres of land To the east of the Ashram is the Sabarmati river flowing south, and on the other side of the river lies the city of Ahmedabad extending lengthwise from north to south along the river bank Only a few years ago, Mahatmaji had pitched a small tent here, and laid the foundations of the Ashram, which has since developed into its present dimensions

Further beyond the Ashram the road runs for another mile till it reaches the Sabarmati station Close to the station is the Sabarmati gaol, which is one of the principal gaols in the Presidency of Bombay, providing accommodation for some twelve hundred prisoners The Ashram, the Gaol, and the Station,—it is these alone that make Sabarmati known to the outside world, it is these three that give distinction to the quiet little village

I have already said that the Ashram stands partly to the east, and partly to the west, of the public road. At the eastern extremity stands a fairly large cottage facing the river, in which Mahatmaji lives There is an open verandah in front of the cottage where Mahatmaji sleeps all the year round. Even in winter he sleeps there I have heard from his own lips that he could not have sleep unless he had a sight of the sky when lying on his bed, and that it was a very old practice of his to watch the stars in the depth of the night. On the south of the verandah is Mahatmaji's sitting room, where he sits the whole day doing his work. Besides, there are four other rooms in this cottage.

A little to the right of Mahatmaji's cottage,* on the very edge of the river-bank, is a clear open space of ground where every morning an hour before sunrise, and every evening after sunset, all the inmates of the Ashram, men, women, and children, gather together and chant the sweet name of God, and recite in chorus verses from the Gita. There have been occasions when the presence of Mahatmaji and the magnetism of the place conspired to make the prayer almost an inspired act The fast-flowing river in front, and the vast open sky above, with the occasional appearance of the moon casting its silvery beams on the spot, now in early morning, now in the evening, enhance a hundred fold the intrinsic sweetness and solemnity of the prayer When Mahatmaji happened to be at the Ashram, he would make it a point to be present at the prayer-meeting, no matter at what sacrifice of other work

Besides Mahatmaji's cottage, in the eastern section of the Ashram there are a number of other cottages which stand at short distances from each other, and are occupied by other inmates There are also a handweaving department, a spinning department, a cow shed and extensive agricultural lands, most of which were at the time given over to the cultivation of cotton

On the western side of the road, a spacious and imposing building, which accommodates the school attached to the Ashram, greets the eye of the traveller Along with the inauguration of the non-co-operation movement, Mahatmaji had abolished the system of literary education till then prevailing at the school, as he felt that that was not

* The place for prayer-meetings has since been changed, and it lies now on the north-east of Mahatmaji's cottage

the time for young men to remain absorbed in acquiring mere book-learning He wanted everybody to take part in the righteous fight then going on throughout the country Some should forward the cause by applying their intelligence to its success, some by participating in active work, the boys must contribute their quota by the exercise of their hands and feet, working at the spinning wheel and the handloom Mahatmaji had in fact laid down specific duties for all, men and women, young and old, and it is precisely because he had succeeded in enlisting the active co-operation of people from the highest to the humblest that his movement had in such short space of time expanded to vast dimensions The abolition of the literary system of instruction at the Ashram School was followed by a considerable fall in its numerical strength, but Mahatmaji did not mind it at all For in Mahatmaji's opinion it was no good for scholars to have an education which would not make men of them, which would not build up their moral backbone, and so make them strong enough when called upon to enter the lists on behalf of Truth and Justice

To the west of the school building stand Mahatmaji's Library, and the Boys' Dining Hall In the western section of the Ashram there are other structures also but these have all grown up for the most part in close association with the school For instance, to the north of the school are four rows of cottages in which about a dozen of the teachers live with their families. Further north and separated from all these is the cottage of Imam Saheb Imam Saheb is an Arab Mussalman, who was once a trader in South Africa. He was one of Mahatmaji's helpers when Mahatmaji launched his campaign of Passive Resistance in assertion of the honour

and self-respect of Indians in that part of the world From that time onwards Imam Saheb has been one of Mahatmaji's companions And Mahatmaji's principal object in bringing him over to India was to give a practical illustration of his belief that it was possible for Hindus and Muslims to live together in bonds of amity while remaining faithful to their respective creeds

The eastern and western halves of the Ashram have grown up on the basis of a common ideal Nevertheless there are differences of outlook which do not however make themselves felt For these do not interfere with the system of daily work to which all have to conform equally. This common programme of daily work and life has to be understood a little closely, and for this certain preliminary observations are necessary The body, the mind and the the soul— these three go to make a human being Ordinarily, however, we see that people who are anxious for mental and moral culture either forget or neglect the needs of the body, and give themselves up wholly to their studies, or to their religious pursuits In order to steer clear of this error, every inmate of the Ashram is bound to do some form of bodily labour or other Even the teachers here draw water from the wells and carry it in vessels suspended from a pole on the shoulder Besides, everyone has to wash his own clothes, clean his own plates, and do such other physical labour for himself As soon as the prayer bell rings at four in the early morning, every one has to wake up and prepare to attend the prayers So, too, when the bell rings in the evening, every inmate must be ready to come and join in the prayers. In respect of all these matters all who belong to the Ashram are bound by

common rules of discipline But the high ideal of renunciation and self-restraint which Mahatmaji has in a unique measure reached in his own life, and which it has been his endeavour to place before the country at large through the discipline of Ashram life is one which can hardly be realised in their daily lives by ordinary men and women and especially those who are married and are householders Truth, Non-violence Brahmacharya or self-control, the non-possession of wealth except such as is absolutely necessary for self-support, etc all these may be accepted as the goal of one's life but their realisation in thought word and deed in one's own daily life could only be the result of a high degree of self-purification Mahatmaji himself knows this, and therefore he would not, either directly or indirectly, force any request on anybody to take up those vows through any formal process of imitation or any process indeed which would smack of outward display As far as I have seen, it is no part of Mahatmaji's system of training to force his views upon others, or to get anybody do a thing merely because he (Mahatmaji) considers the doing of it right and proper. But his one anxiety is to strive unturingly to make his own life grow from more to more in purity and holiness, and he is quite pleased and happy if people should accept or carry out as much of his teaching as they can in a most natural way and out of their own initiative.

CHAPTER V

THE ASHRAM PRAYER

At the sacred hour before sunrise, the Ashram bell rings to rouse the inmates from their sleep That ringing sound penetrates your ears and wakens your slumbering consciousness But this call—is it merely a call to you to shake off the slumber of your body, or does it betoken also a call to awaken your slumbering soul? From every quarter of the Ashram are heard voices of awakened people, and soon with rapid steps they are seen repairing to the place of prayer meeting, where they all assemble at the proper time The Dawn is still fast asleep in the lap of Night, her beloved maid of honour, who protects her sleeping Queen from the world's gaze with her thousand flashing eyes The keen rays of those eyes fill every quarter of the heavens In front, the sweet murmur of the running brook heard like an indistinct sound of music wafted from afar through some unknown region breaks in upon the solemn stillness On a sudden, blending its harmony with this note of music is heard the note of prayer uttered in chorus by a hundred throats

"This morning I worship the Great Being, Who is beyond the reach of Mind and Speech by whose favour the Eternal Sound receives its primal energy to whom the Vedas point by the words, 'Not this Not this', Who is the Great Lord to whom all gods bow in reverence, Who is the Self-existent (uncreate), Immutable and Primal Being." *

* प्रातर्भजामि मनसो वचसामगम्यम् ।
वाचो विभान्ति निखिला यदनुग्रहेण ॥

Then follow songs of praise in salutation to the Earth, to Saraswati, to the Guru, to Vishnu, and to Siva Then, the devotee places at the Lotus Feet of his Lord the yearnings of his heart in the following terms —"I yearn not for earth nor heaven, nor even freedom from rebirth, but my heart's yearning is to relieve the woes of suffering humanity. May the peoples be happy! May the rulers of the earth following the path of righteousness protect their peoples! May good ever attend the Cows and the Brahmans! May the whole world be happy!"

Lastly the devotees recite in chorus the following hymn of complete self-surrender to the Feet of the Lord —

"I bow to Thee, the Creative Energy I bow to Thee, the Spiritual Energy that sustains the whole of Creation I bow to Thee, the Great Being Who sets free all from the fetters of finite life I bow to Thee, the one all pervading Reality I bow to thee, the Omnipresent, Eternal Truth."

"Thou alone art our fittest refuge, Thou alone, the worthiest to be desired, Thou alone art the Revealer of created existences, Thou alone art Self-Revealed, Thou alone art Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of all existence, Thou alone art beyond all limitation, Immutable, Transcendental" *

यन्नेति नेति वचनैर्निगमा अवोचुः ।
तं देवदेवमजमच्युतमाहुरग्र्यम् ॥

*"नमस्ते सते ते जगत्कारणाय ।
नमस्ते चिते सर्वलोकाश्रयाय ॥

After the scriptural part of the prayer is over, the Ashram musician will teach you through his Bhajans *— "O man, you are not an isolated unit in this world, standing apart from everything else, but you are vitally united with the whole Let it be your endeavour in a living manner to realise this oneness. You will have to purify your life through work and service to the world, and when your life is purified should you be able to shake off the antagonism born of a separate, selfish existence For when this antagonism of spirit ceases, then truly do you become one with the whole world Therefore, the Shastras† make a threefold division of action, e g, Satvik (altruistic or other-regarding), Rajasik (or self regarding) and Tamasik (neither selfish nor unselfish but the product of self-delusion) Therefore, try to realise the full significance of this teaching of the Shastras; and while devoting yourself the whole of the day to work try to bring the same into comformity with that teaching No one remains without work even for one single moment; nor is it possible for him to do so Work alone would lift you, and work also may lead you down to hell The good

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नमोऽद्वैततत्त्वाय मुक्तिप्रदाय ।
नमो ब्रह्मणे व्यापिने शाश्वताय ॥

"त्वमेकं शरण्यं त्वमेकं वरेण्यम् ।
त्वमेकं जगत्पालकं स्वप्रकाशम् ।
त्वमेकं जगत्कर्तृ-पातृ-प्रहर्तृ ।
त्वमेकं परं निश्चलं निर्विकल्पम् ॥

* The singing of devotional songs

† Hindu scriptures

and the evil of diverse types of action have been explained to you Let this teaching be imprinted on your mind, and let all your daily work conform to it"

Thus should you begin the day's work at the Ashram If you have any doubts, you may have them cleared up by the Acharya * It is your duty to equip your mind as efficiently as you can, so that you may carry out the day's work with the necessary energy and strength of purpose

Again at the close of the day s work in the evening, is heard the summons for prayer You will hear again the sound of the prayer bell enjoining you to leave work The sun has just sunk below the horizon lighting up the western sky with his crimson rays The same river-bank, the same open sky, and the fresh gentle breeze of evening all appear to be anxious to co-operate in allaying your fatigue after a heavy day's work The joyous bouyant shouts of Ashram children are heard like the blended notes of birds repairing to their nests All on a sudden all sounds are hushed, and the loud chanting of a hymn of praise to the Almighty, is heard "He who is the Lord of the Universe, in whom all subsist, and without whom nothing can subsist, let all our heart's devotion and love be laid at His Feet ' O Lord! to Thee Whose praises come forth in celestial strains from the lips of Brahma, Varuna, Indra, Rudra, Marut, Whose glories are sung by the Upanishads through the chanting of the Sama hymns ! Whose Presence is realised by the followers of the yoga system through transcendent meditation on the Lord, and Whose infinitude is beyond the powers of Devas and Asuras to realise,—to Thee, O Lord ! we bow our heads in adoration ' After this will be recited in chorus in sweet

* A religious teacher

musical tones some sacred verses from the scriptures These will teach you that if you seek to attain peace you will have to control your lust for material enjoyment, you will have to turn the course of your desires inward, so that they may change their character and get spiritualised In the morning you were roused to throw yourself whole-heartedly into work, and it was pointed out to you what type of work was truly conducive to your welfare Now when you have finished your day's labour and are returning for rest, it is necessary to tell you that sleep alone cannot give you rest. For bodily rest is not the only kind of rest During your day's work, you have had to come under many external influences, and these must have affected your mind in diverse ways If you can shake them off, and so cleanse your spirit, then indeed will you be able to earn true rest It is for you to place before yourself the high ideal of an active life in which while engaged in outward work you nevertheless retain your equanimity of mind You will have to bring under your control the wayward passions and impulses lusting for outward gratification, and steadily to develop the power of your inner self Even as the waters of rivers find their resting place in the Great Ocean, so also may the passions and impulses be turned away from their courses and made to enter the regions of the spirit within so that they may be transmuted into spiritual energies Thus, for him alone is true peace who has chained and spiritualised those desires of his which are seeking to find an external outlet through self-indulgence He who lets himself be at the mercy of such outgoing desires and impulses, for him indeed, there is no Peace

It would be simply impossible to have a true insight

into the deeper springs of Mahatmaji's activities, slowly struggling towards self-expression in the shape of this Ashram, if we left out of our consideration these morning and evening prayers, devotions and teachings Mahatmaji's genius for organisation and work has captured the imagination of the whole of India and has created in a universal awakening His clarion call has been heard from one end of the country to the other But if we seek to weigh and measure him merely by this external standard, we shall hardly be able to enter into the secret of his real greatness ; we shall hardly be in a position to comprehend those spiritual forces of character which lie at the very root of the external manifestation of Mahatmaji's power and influence

CHAPTER VI

FOUNDATIONS OF MAHATMAJI'S SPIRITUAL LIFE

Those who will have so far followed with appreciation the morning and evening prayers at the Ashram will be in a position to arrive at some understanding of the foundations of Mahatmaji's religious life In the prayers there is a double note First there is the note of emphasis on the doing of Satvik or altruistic work But mere work, however unselfish,--what would it lead to? What, in fact, is the ultimate objective, the spiritual goal, of such purified activities? That is the problem for all true aspirants Therefore, the prayers contain a second note, pointing out that genuine work looses the chains of matter, and leads ultimately to the emancipation of the spirit from the bondage of matter i e, sets the soul free In that way is emphasised the high spiritual value of purified work as laying the very foundations of a truly religious life

But the real problem for one who would seek to pursue a religious life is how he may keep his activities free from the taint of impurity For a man may pursue a course of mere intellectual discussion of religious principles and doctrines, and yet if his thoughts and actions continue to be impure and selfish, the attainment of a religious life truly so-called, must remain a most remote contingency It is therefore, of paramount importance not to pursue at haphazard a life of mere strenuous activity, but to work so that your work does not become a source of further bondage The worker must,

indeed, from the beginning be trained to distinguish between good actions and bad,--trained to understand what sort of activities tends to enmesh you in a life of bondage and misery, and what other sort tends to lift you out of such a life

Mahatma Gandhi is a hero in the field of work, of work, that is to say, leading to the goal of such spiritual freedom However much he might allow himself to get entangled in a thousand and one activities, his spiritual idealism never forsakes him It is by the power of his spirit that he is able to keep himself free from their disturbing and contaminating influences, and he would pursue his course with a singleness of purpose, with a rare equanimity, and a unique power of self-conscious strength born of the power of spirit, even if he was left without a single worldly supporter. That is why he was able to lift even political work on to the level of a religious calling There is nothing in his politics which partakes of pretence, diplomacy, or hypocrisy His politics does not contemplate the attainment of political freedom with a view to serve the selfish interests of any particular individuals, classes or sects, to help in the growth of their selfish power, prestige or prosperity The ultimate objective of his political efforts, in fact, is to help forward a spirit of duty and service among Indians towards fellow Indians, irrespective of class or creed Those who mean by Swaraj the mere winning of political power, that is to say, the wresting from the hands of the English people the reins of government would find out that Mahatmaji would not remain satisfied with the mere winning For if after such political power had been once wrested by the efforts of any particular class or community, that class or community

should become supreme and wield undue power and tyrannise over the general body of the people, Mahatmaji would be the foremost to resist such tyranny and deprive that class or community of its authority For himself, Mahatmaji has no craving for riches, fame, or power Mahatmaji's heart bleeds at the sight of afflicted poverty-ridden India He has harnessed all his energies either to the mending or the ending of a system of government which has made all this possible Therefore it is that his actions are so pure, so spiritual, so Satvik (altruistic), and so for him also politics has become the handmaid of a religious life

Mahatmaji has accustomed himself to examine every single act of his in the light of its spiritual value, and convert it into a dynamic element of higher life by the power of his spirituality It is one outstanding merit of his that in the vast majority of cases he hits the right mark, when in judging actions in the light of their spiritual values he has to discriminate between the true and the false, the pure and the impure To live the life of the world and be bound up with its activities, and yet tread the narrow straight path in the manner indicated is indeed an extremely difficult task And this is because on account of our personal likes and dislikes, over subtle cravings for enjoyment, and our anxiety to gratify our personal will, our vision of Truth is obscured, and we get bewildered when trying to form a correct judgment on the spiritual value of our activities. This is why many aspirants after spiritual perfection in the early stages live a life of seclusion from the world. But Mahatmaji, however, does not approve of such a course When one of his own followers for a limited period of time

took to a life of seclusion for purposes of spiritual concentration, Mahatmaji told me that such seclusion was no good By keeping away from the world, he said, we might indeed escape from the influences or the temptations of the world, but that would be only for a time Therefore in his opinion, the one thing needful was to wrestle with those influences and temptations, and so gradually build up the power of controlling them Not till then was our position at all secure, and so he summed up by saying that we must learn to acquire the power of keeping our heads cool and our minds calm, even in the midst of raging storms in a rough sea

On another occasion he recited to me the following verses from the Gita, and said that as explained therein, he could not understand why it should not be possible to go on praying within* while remaining engaged in external activities

"नैव किंचित् करोमीति युक्तो मन्येत तत्त्ववित् ।
पश्यन् शृण्वन् स्पृशन् जिघ्रन्नश्नन् गच्छन् स्वपन् श्वसन् ॥
प्रलपन् विसृजन् गृह्णन्नुन्मिषन्निमिषन्नपि ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेषु वर्त्तन्त इति धारयन् ॥"

Gita V verses 8-9

[*Translation* —The man who is fixed on his inner self, and understands the truth of things regarding himself as doing nothing, but that only the several organs of sense are engaged in their corresponding activities, as when seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, moving, sleeping, breathing, talking, throwing, taking, opening his eye-lids or closing them]

Thus Mahatmaji sets before himself a consistent plan of religious life in which work is transformed into worship, leading onward to greater and greater self-purification, and ultimately to the entire freeing of the soul from the bondage of the self, or, in other words, to the attainment of an unending Peace He used to say that we must pursue our work with the energy and velocity of the Punjab Express, but never losing our balance and our capacity to free ourselves from it whenever necessary In other words, we must preserve our sense of mastery, remaining firm and unmoved, spiritually calm and unaffected According to him that is no genuine work where the worker loses his equanimity and gets excited, agitated or disturbed, for he then loses his sense of mastery, and the work loses its spiritual character and becomes a source of bondage and misery Those who have been going through this book from the beginning must have noticed many and various incidents illustrative of Mahatmaji's patience, and his wonderful power to preserve an unperturbed calm, while all around was confusion and disorganisation But I have had further opportunities since of coming into closer relationship with him and have obtained still more convincing proofs of this power of his Even in the stormiest days of the Non-co-operation agitation while the political sky was charged with cloud and thunder, Mahatmaji would pursue with perfect self-composure his routine-work of conducting his two weeklies, *Young India* (in English) and *Navajivan* (in Guzarati), filling the whole of them with his own contributions Then again there was no limit to the number of letters and telegrams that used in those days daily to pour in from every part of the country, and which demanded his

immediate attention In spite of all this, I have never seen him other than cool and collected Those who have not seen it with their own eyes could hardly believe that it would be possible for Mahatmaji quietly to sit and get on with his work of writing out articles, etc , when all around thousands of people were roaring, shouting their joyous shouts and crying cries of victory (for Mahatma Gandhi)

That Mahatmaji is a great soul is apparent from what we have seen of the extra-ordinary qualities of his character Nevertheless, he has not yet succeeded in sundering the ties of self which bind him down to the body and a finite existence In other words, he has not yet reached the heights of the Freedom of the Spirit technically known in Hindu Scriptures as Mukti or Freedom from the bondage of Matter He has himself admitted it time and again One day in the course of a talk at the Ashram, he had expressed himself in the following way —" When once I should sit down and concentrate my whole self on the attainment of Mukti, then not till Mukti was attained should I ever rise from my seat " From what I have seen of his power of self-concentration, his self-control, and his unique mastery over his body and mind, I can very well believe unreservedly in what he thus declared about his own spiritual capacity It is not a matter of very uncommon experience to find men who would deny themselves many of their comforts and enjoyments, or who would go so far as to repress with an iron will the imperious cravings of the senses demanding indulgence and gratification But what is a very common experience about them is that their renunciation would hardly touch their character Their so-called renunciation instead of making

them meak, humble and self-effacing, would on the contrary make them uncommonly haughty, arrogant and self-assertive. Even while renouncing some of their worldly pleasures, they would more than compensate for it by an exaggerated self-pride Mahatmaji's renunciation is far different from this My impression about him is that most of the things that hold man in bondage, things internal as well as external, no longer have their hold on him That to my mind is the only explanation of one striking fact in his public life It is that notwithstanding the unquestioned hold which he has established over the hearts of unnumbered millions, notwithstanding the power, prestige, name and fame which he enjoys, and the command of wealth which is his, one could not trace in him the least indication of self-pride, haughtiness or vanity What all this means in the way of purity and cleansing of life could be properly appreciated only by those who by actual experience know what tremendous wrestling is involved in getting oneself free from the intoxication of name, fame, wealth, power and things of that kind

CHAPTER VII

MAHATMAJI'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

The whole of Mahatmaji's life is indeed one long continued process of victorious self-discipline It is hard to imagine to what lengths of self-imposed discipline he must have gone in order to bring his body and mind in subjection and make them subservient to his will I have seen him undergo two long fasts extending over five days each * The fasts no doubt induced a great physical weakness, but as for his mind, it remained as strong as ever The first two days of the fast, Mahatmaji used to say, were spent in some little suffering, but from the third day onward such suffering ceased and his body enjoyed perfect restfulness, while inwardly his experience was that of an unalloyed, uninterrupted state of peace Even while fasting, the usual programme of writing for the two weeklies, or indeed of any of his other duties, e g, spinning, etc., would continue to be done with the utmost regularity and without the slightest break in any particular Though married, he had been leading a life of Brahmacharya or celibacy for many years past † Again by controlling his palate he has accustomed himself to giving his body only such kind and only so much of nourishment as are necessary for its support and maintenance For seven months on end, I have seen Mahatmaji subsisting on three meals a day

* Those were during the period of seven months (1921-22) covered by this book

† *Vide* p 79 of the English translation of his "Guide to Health"

(morning, noon and evening), each meal consisting of sixteen ounces of goat's milk, three slices of toast, or an equivalent quantity of flour Bhakri *, a score of grapes or raisins, and a couple of oranges

I have heard that before the days of Non-co-operation, Mahatmaji used to spend two hours every morning grinding wheat into meal He was so weak of body, yet he was able to do so much physical labour, merely because he was so strong in will Till quite recently he used to travel only third class At that period of his life he had to suffer much insult and ill-treatment at the hands of fellow-passengers Sometimes he would be taken as a cowherd and treated as such, sometimes he would be mistaken for a "Jat", i e, an ordinary cultivator, and turned out of his seat But he would submit to all this insult and hardship without disclosing his identity One day a member of the Ashram said to me casually,— 'You, friends, are now travelling in the company of Bapuji quite comfortably indeed But there were days when he would carry his own luggage on his head, and walk any distance from the station to reach his destination" That, of course, is now impossible for Mahatmaji has to give every moment of his time to the work of the nation But truth to say Mahatmaji would make no distinction between the old style of travelling and the present Rather if the question were put to him he would perhaps tell you that in the old days he enjoyed his freedom of movement, but now travelling second class or by motor according to prescribed programme was not a little irksome

This is by no means a display of false humility, or an

* *Bhakri* is a kind of Guzarat bread

outward affectation of dislike for material pleasures and comforts I do not think that anything could ever come from Mahatmaji which he did not truly believe in From my seven months' almost uninterrupted intercourse with him, I have come to believe that it is not possible for him to cherish any falsehood even in his dreams But the question may very well be asked,—'How is it possible that Mahatmaji should suffer pain because he has to use things which are conducive to bodily comfort, and which, because they are pleasurable, are coveted by people at large?" To elucidate this point it would be necessary for me to show how in all important matters of his life and activities, in his habits and manners, he differs from the vast majority and has chalked out an independent course for himself

Thus, arriving at the Ashram, it did not take me long to notice that although he was its founder and presiding deity, he lived there as if he was no better than a guest, all his authority had been relegated to other hands So if anybody came to him with a petition in connection with Ashram matters, he would reply that he was there as a guest, and it was not for him to exercise any authority or grant any prayer Though born in a middle-class family, he had not kept any property for himself The expenses of the Ashram were being defrayed by a number of friends So many books or writings of his were being sold in the market, and yet he would not exercise his right of proprietorship nor would he take anything from publishers in exercise of such right In furtherance of Congress work, Mahatmaji had to undertake tours from one end of the country to the other, and yet he would not take a farthing from the All-India Tilak Swaraj Fund to defray

his tour expenses. Towards keeping riches for personal use or enjoyment, his attitude was practically one of complete indifference or detachment When Mahatmaji would return from a tour to the Ashram, common people from the town or from the surrounding villages would come in throngs to have his Darshan, and would offer him not only fruits and flowers as an act of worship, but also coins of various amounts That was a decent source of income to the Ashram for the daily collections went up to a high figure But, after a time finding that his work was suffering on this account, he directed that the offer of such presents should be prohibited

Mahatmaji, as is well-known, has not renounced family and turned an ascetic, he has throughout lived his life as a householder with wife and children But even here there is something characteristic of the man Thus while Mahatmaji has never been found wanting in promoting all that is conducive to their true welfare, still he could never bring himself down to the level of an ordinary man of the world whose one thought is how to serve the material interests of his family I could never detect any the least discrimination made by him in his treatment of the members of his own family as against those who did not belong to it Rather, if anything, it had appeared to me that towards his associates and followers, he showed a greater consideration It is this equal attitude and equal treatment towards all that has earned for Mahatmaji the honoured title of "Bapu or Father In Guzarat he is best known by the name "Bapu' Thus the right which his sons claim when they call him "Bapu" is no monopoly of theirs, but is equally shared with them by the general public All this

becomes apparent when one has lived with him for some little time Then it does not take long to discover that those who in the first instance sought to approach him on terms of equality would begin to address him as "Bapuji" not very long after

What ordinarily happens is that people take kindly to those who would speak well of them, and are repelled by those who would speak ill But in the case of Mahatmaji, I had so far observed a complete reversal of this rule No panegyrist could ever hope to ingratiate himself with him A certain gentleman from Madras had written a book with its title as "The Gospel of Gandhi" When Mahatmaji saw that the word "gospel" was used as the title, he felt pained beyond measure He told me that the use of the word with reference to his teachings was a direct insult to religion itself On another occasion, a certain article from a British newspaper* containing eulogies of Mahatmaji had come to be reprinted in *Young India* Mahatmaji was then on tour, and he came to notice it only after the particular issue was out This publication disturbed and distressed him beyond words When one attains to a position of power and pre-eminence among his fellows, the usual rule is that a certain section of his countrymen would begin to speak in high praise of him, while another section would find fault with him In the case of Mahatmaji also, I noticed the same thing Everyday he used to receive many letters There were some among these which would shower encomiums upon him, while others would have no words too strong to express their disapproval or condemnation of him Sometimes I would read out to him one or two letters

* "The Glasgow Herald"

containing his eulogies and I found that eulogy gave him no pleasure, but left him rather wan and dejected But on the contrary, whenever any criticism or condemnation was read out to him, he would listen to every word with rapt attention, anxious to discover how much or how little of truth there might be in it In the days of the Bombay riots,* Mahatmaji was inundated with letters from the Parsis of Bombay, both men and women, containing the foulest abuse of him I read out everyone of these letters to him, but I saw that such abuse made not the least impression on him, for he remained as calm as ever To be attacked in this foul manner, and yet to remain wholly unaffected by it,—such self control appeared to me at the time as something quite exceptional

One thing that struck me as equally extraordinary was that those who opposed him received at his hands a measure of consideration, honour and affectionate solicitude which he would not ordinarily extend even to the most devoted of his followers Any eulogy pronounced on him or his qualifications or virtues would leave him cold and indifferent, and that is all the gain which the panegyrist could expect at his hands for all his pains Now it may well be granted that Mahatmaji's best wishes were unremittingly showered upon his devoted followers, which went a great deal to purify and ennoble their lives Nevertheless from all that I have seen my feeling is that as between opponents and friends his love and tenderness were reserved more for the former than for the latter

* On the occasion of the Prince of Wales, who landed at Bombay November 17, 1921 *Vide* a later chapter under the heading, "The Bombay Riots

For the humiliated and the oppressed, Mahatmaji's sympathy is deep and unstinted, and nowhere else could they expect anything like it Mahatmaji's heart instinctively goes out to the person who has incurred everybody's displeasure. On one occasion, for some reason or other, many inmates of the Ashram were averse to accord consideration and attention to a certain person, whose ways and manners had become the subject of criticism in Ashram circles Mahatmaji also disapproved of the conduct of that person But from the day that he came to discover that the Ashram public had become unkind, from that day onwards he made it a point, in spite of a thousand and other pressing duties every day to go and visit the person in question, who was soon reinstated in public favour Mahatmaji's psychology in matters like this is worth noting Whenever he sees anybody under him behave untruthfully or do anything dishonestly, Mahatmaji's practice invariably is to examine himself in the first instance, to see wherein he himself might have erred He holds that unless there was some lurking wrong or untruthfulness in his own character, people working in intimate touch with him could not be guilty of such wrong conduct My honest belief as the result of my association with him at close quarters is that Mahatmaji's life is so transparent, clear, and pure that he has hardly anything to hide from public view

CHAPTER VIII

MAHATMAJI'S SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

How exactly Mahatmaji should have been able to attain this lofty standard of purity and unaffected simpleness, by pursuing what definite spiritual processes should he have succeeded in purging himself to such an extraordinary extent of the impurities and imperfections of ordinary human nature— is a question which occurs naturally to most aspirants after higher life But here I am unable to posit anything definite for although I have lived with Mahatmaji uninterruptedly for seven long months night and day, I do not pretend to have any special knowledge of his life's inner discipline except of course what could be gleaned from the outside For Mahatmaji was not given to discussing matters of such discipline That side the inner religious side of his life, he seemed to be anxious to veil from public view as much as possible Such at any rate is my conviction, judging from all that I have seen of him But there is one thing about him which is most clear to me It is that he has an undying faith in Truth and the pursuit of Truth as a spiritual force, and that for the sake of Truth there is nothing which Mahatmaji cannot give up I have been led from this to hold that Mahatmaji's spiritual cleansing has followed as a natural effect,—the effect, namely, of the light of Truth constantly beating upon him and transmuting his life and character

Born of a Vaishnava family, the instincts of a Vaishnava

are bred in his bones. His childhood and boyhood having been passed in Guzarat where the teachings of Jainism hold sway over the minds of the people, he must have in no small measure come under the influence of such teachings in the most impressionable period of his life During his stay in England and in South Africa, he came in contact with many religiously minded Christians, and under their influence studied the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ with profound respect He has also associated with many devout Mussalmans Further he has a wonderful power of disentangling and seizing on the vital truths of every religion which has saved him from falling into the snares of sectarian ideas and the narrowness of sectarian feelings In these days a copy of the Gita is always to be found with him, and the Gita has become his guide, friend and philosopher It is like a necklace which he wears round his neck He is an England returned barrister, and yet in many ways his habits and manners are those of a devout Hindu

Along with a copy of the Gita, Mahatmaji used to keep in his Khaddar bag a rosary of 'Rudraksha" beads. But I had never seen him using it During the critical days of the Non-co-operation movement, on two mornings going to remove his bedding, I found the rosary lying near his pillow, and I thought that he must have used it over night Again, in September (1921), when he met Mr Mukerji in Calcutta, Mahatmaji told him that when reciting God's name he used his rosary and it was shown by Mahatmaji to Mr. Mukerji, but that by actual experience he had found that if he went on taking God's name while turning the spinning wheel, that did him greater good than telling the beads, and that he had come to believe that if people took

to the wheel as a religious discipline their minds would naturally turn towards God Writing on the "moral aspect" of hand-spinning in India in his *Young India*, Mahatmaji has given expression to the very same sentiments Thus we find him writing as follows —"And I verily believe that when millions take to it (the spinning-wheel) as a *sacrament*, it will turn our faces godward ' * I know nothing in detail of the manner of his praying, but I have oftentimes seen him working away at the wheel with deep, one pointed attention, and the thought had come to me many a time that Mahatmaji probably practised the Ajapa§ mode of prayer But whence or how he had learnt that system of prayer is more than I could say

I have placed before the reader just so much of the religious side of Mahatmaji's life as has directly come under my personal observation, or as I have been able to comprehend. Various attempts are being made by various people to probe and estimate from various points of view his all-sided greatness, and thus to arrive at an integral view of his distinctive personality But I hold that it would never be possible to arrive at a synthetic understanding of Mahatmaji s character, so long as there is no deeper under-

* Vide *Young India* for September 22, 1921, article "Wanted Experts" The full paragraph containing the above lines may be given here —'It (handspinning) will save our women from forced violation of their purity It will, as it must, do away with begging as a means of livelihood It will remove our enforced idleness. It will steady the mind. And I verily believe that when millions take to it as a sacrament, it will turn our faces godward. This is the moral aspect of spinning"

§ "Japa" is the silent recitation of God's name along with the telling of the beads. The "Ajapa" system is the silent recitation of God's name following the natural course of respiration.

standing and appreciation of the religious side of his life, that side which is ever welling up from both within him and without,—'within him' in his pure, ennobling, self-effacing thoughts, and 'without', in the shape of his daily disinterested acts and activities Mahatmaji is very fond of a certain hymn composed by the great saint-poet of Guzarat, Narasaya Very frequently at prayer-time, this hymn would be sung to him When Mahatmaji was going to bid farewell to his beloved Ashram after his arrest*, it was the same hymn that he asked those that were there to sing to him It would seem that Mahatmaji's whole soul breathes out through that hymn It paints so fully the whole cast of his mind and the deepest longings of his spirit that I must give below the full text of the Guzarati original together with the translation

"वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिये, जे पीड पराई जाने रे ।
परदुःखे उपकार करे तोये, मन अभिमान न आने रे ॥
सकल लोकमां सहुने वदे, निंदा न करे केनी रे ।
वाच काछ मन निश्चल रासे, धन धन जननी तेनी रे ॥
समदृष्टि ने तृष्णा त्यागी, परस्त्री जेने मात रे ।
जिह्वा थकि असत्य न बोले, परधन नव झाले हाथ रे ॥
मोह माया व्यापे नहि जेने, दृढ वैराग्य जेना मनमां रे ।
राम नाम शुं तालि लागी, सकल तीरथ तेना तनमां रे ॥
वणलोभी ने कपट रहित छे, काम क्रोध निवार्या रे ।
भने नरसैयो तेनुं दरशन करतां, कुल एको तेर तर्या रे ॥"

* 10th March, 1922 (10-30 p m.)

Translation —"He is the true Vaishnava who knows and feels another's woes as his own Ever ready to serve, he never boasts

"He bows to every one, and despises no one, keeping his thought, word and deed pure Blessed is the mother of such a one

"He looks upon all with an equal eye He has got rid of his lust He reveres every woman as his mother His tongue would fail him if he attempted to utter an untruth He covets not another's wealth The bonds of earthly attachment hold him not His mind is deeply rooted in detachment (renunciation) Every moment he is intent on reciting the name of 'Ram'* (God) All the holy places are ever present in his body

"He has conquered greed, hypocrisy, passion and anger A sight of such a Vaishnava, says Narasaya, saves a family through seventy-one generations"

It will be seen that this celebrated hymn of Narasaya praises the name of 'Ram' Once also when Mahatmaji after a whole day's work and fast was feeling thoroughly exhausted, I heard him heaving a heavy sigh and taking the name of the Lord thus—"Shree Ram Shree Ram"† Further having regard to the reverential manner in which he speaks of Tulsidas's 'Ramayan' and listens to hymns in praise of 'Ram', I have come definitely to believe that he recites the name of "Ram," as an act of divine worship

* An incarnation of God whose praises are sung in *Ramayana*.

† Vide Chapter IV of Part I of this volume.

CHAPTER IX

MAHATMAJI'S FAMILY

Just as everyone in the Ashram calls Mahatmaji by the honoured name of "Bapu" (Father), so also his wife is known as "Ba" "Ba" in Guzarati means "Mother" As wife of Mahatma Gandhi her life has been one of severe testing Her husband is recognised as the greatest man of the world living, and accorded royal honours by the people of this country Therefore on her has devolved the responsibility appertaining to the position of the mother of 33 crores of India's children While she is no doubt the partner of her exalted husband's fame and glory, none of the pleasures and comforts of the world has been hers For she shares with her husband a life of sacrifice and service, and in her devotion to the cause of the country and the general public, she follows in the steps of her great husband Never has she stood in the way of her husband in his pursuit of a higher life, and whenever or in whatever way it had become necessary for her to come to his assistance, that assistance she had extended to him by thought, word and deed Thus shall she find an honoured place on the roll of India's great women noted for their virtues and devotion to their husbands and India will not willingly let her memory die

It is no easy matter to share with Mahatmaji his keen judgment of things, and "Ba" has been hard put to it on occasion to conform to Mahatmaji's high standard of such

judgment On one occasion a certain inmate of the Ashram was unwell, but "Ba" had not kept herself informed of it. So Mahatmaji felt it necessary to point out to her her lapse, and he did it at the prayer-meeting in the presence of everybody. "If Devadas* had fallen ill, you would have known of it long ago, but how is it that you do not keep yourself informed when others fall ill?" And on another day he said to me, "I have from the first so trained 'Ba' that she never shrinks from any kind of work even down to the cleansing of water-closets But when she feels thoroughly worn out by hard work, she, poor thing, neither grumbles nor protests, but simply weeps"

Mahatmaji's kitchen at the Ashram is known, as the "Big Kitchen" When he would be staying at the Ashram, he would have every day many guests who would be served from the "Big Kitchen" Whenever friends or acquaintances came to see Mahatmaji, he would make it a point to invite them to be his guests, and it became Ba's duty to prepare food with her own hands for all the guests, morning and afternoon † When this went on for some length of time her health would visibly suffer and she would look a shrivelled figure On the other hand, I have often seen that when Mahatmaji stayed away from the Ashram and she got some respite her strength would return and she would look as fresh as ever Thus I observed that in her daily life and activities, she followed her great husband's ways by cultivating habits of indifference to or disregard of worldly pleasures and comforts. Here

* Devadas is Mahatmaji's youngest son.

† The practice at the Ashram is to finish the evening meal before sundown

therefore is a shining example of wifely devotion and service to the husband, which "Ba" is leaving behind her for all Indian women to follow

Of the four sons of Mahatmaji, only the youngest, Devadas, was at the time I am speaking of living at the Ashram During our stay at Madras, Mahatmaji had casually mentioned to someone that after his return to the Ashram, he would have only Devadas and me by his side to serve him That was the reason, I now saw, why Prabhudas had been told off to Wardha and Jamnadas to Rajkot, for other work With those two I had become very intimate but I had now got to cultivate the acquaintance of Devadas I was feeling a little uneasy at the prospect, but Prabhudas assured me that Devadas was so tender-hearted and obliging that it was no trouble to be friends with him

I saw Devadas for the first time at the Ahmedabad station Through the exuberance of his spirits, he was humming a tune, while he was also getting our luggage put in the motor lorry We drove to the Ashram in that lorry, and on the way, commenting on the speech of a certain well-known political leader, I heard him stigmatise it as mere "rigmarole" His vivacity, natural to a young man in the vigour of health, his keen intelligence, and his fine conversational powers cast a spell over me Brought up and trained by Mahatmaji himself as a boy, Devadas had imbibed many of his father's qualities Devadas's courtesy, and his readiness to oblige others, his fearless courage, and his cheerful and calm exterior seemed to me to be quite exceptional Mahatmaji himself had once remarked to me,—"There is not an iota of fear in Devadas's composi-

tion. Where other people should think thrice before venturing at any place, Devadas without the least hesitation would go and enter there" By slow, imperceptible degrees, unknown even to Devadas himself, Mahatmaji had been trying to develop Devadas's character, and make him imbibe the high moral principles and ideals for which the Ashram stands And it did not take me long to see that as Devadas grew in years, he would acquire such knowledge, experience and maturity of judgment as would make him fit to play an important part as one of Mahatmaji's most efficient instruments

I must now tell something of several young men, ardent lovers of their country, who though not Mahatmaji's own sons, still formed a brother hood with Mahatmaji's children and like them had their meals in Mahatmaji's 'Big Kitchen" While Devadas was remarkable for the charm of his conversation and for the ease with which he could make friends with others there was "Chhotalalji," the quiet strenuous worker, who represented just the opposite type of character You might ply him as much as you liked with questions but you would hardly get out of him an answer His reserve and habit of silent work are such that his very presence at the Ashram could hardly be noticed But just as the silent working of the life-breath' would keep the body functioning, so also Chhotalal s unremitting, albeit silent, supervision of Ashram life and his unobtrusive efforts to maintain Ashram discipline acted even like the vital breath for the body politic of the Ashram, and preserved its life and individuality Mahatmaji was wont to say—"Chhotalal is a sipahi", i e, a soldier In truth, the only thing that attracted Chhotalalji was his own duties;

for every thing else he had supreme indifference,—so much so, indeed, that if the world were to go to pieces, Chhotalalji would not forget to be present at the post of duty at the appointed hour, as though nothing was the matter

"Surendraji," again, was a different type of character He had not the gifts of Chhotalalji but he would capture you by his charm of manner, his courtesy, his gentlemanliness, and his passion for philosophic discussion He had an ever-beaming countenance and was ever ready to serve his friends But even so, his passion for the acquisition of philosophic lore was so strong in him that under no circumstances could he restrain himself from indulging in it Therefore, there was no end to his questionings, and he found it hard, indeed, at times to give himself heart and soul, and in a spirit of austere devotion, to any prescribed duty Nevertheless his extraordinary power of ingratiating himself with others and making friends of them, had stood him in good stead indeed, for he had, at such an early age as his acquired a working knowledge of Urdu, Marathi, Guzarati, etc, besides a mastery of his own vernacular, Hindi

Then, there was a third youngman by name "Pyeralalji" Judged from the outside he looked as grave and reserved as Chhotalalji But Pyeralalji would let himself go if only you could strike a responsive chord in his heart, e g, by starting a discussion on some high topic of intellectual interest Pyeralalji had received his higher English education at the Punjab University of which he was a graduate Mahatmaji would speak of him as a "scholar" when introducing him to others When Mahatmaji had to look up his own writings or speeches, he would specially

depute Pyeralalji Mahatmaji was wont to remark that Pyeralal was a veritable "Encyclopaedia" of all his published writings and speeches

The youngest of these "spiritual sons" of Mahatmaji was Balkrishna, more familiarly known as 'Bakoba' An artist by temperament, Bakoba lived to drown himself in the delights of music When he would sing, the sweetness and softness of his voice would charm every hearer You see Balkrishna, and you are at once reminded of the Brahmachary youths of old living in hermitages with their Rishi parents in forest glades As befitting a true artist, his nature yet retained its original innocence and simplicity. Nor was there anything to show that Bakoba was in danger of losing his unsophisticatedness with the growth of years, as ordinarily happened to youthful people

There is not the least doubt that Mahatmaji was ever watchful of the good of every member of his household,—his wife, his sons, and those others who were intimately associated with him Nevertheless I noticed that for Manu, his five-year old grand daughter, and for Lakshmi, his seven-year old foster-daughter, his feelings were of the tenderest, and it seemed to me that with them he had a real bond of union The imperturbable gravity of Mahatmaji's demeanour led me on occasions to think that nothing on earth could relax him, and that he stood like a rock, calm and immovable But even when Mahatmaji was in his mood of high strung severity, Manu and Lakshmi would come and engage him, and his features would relax and he no longer retained his unbending manner

Lakshmi comes of a family of untouchables, and her story, connected as it is with the problem of untouchability

on whose solution Mahatmaji has set his whole heart has naturally acquired a special prominence throughout the country She has her parents still alive, and still Mahatmaji has been bringing her up as a foster-daughter The advent of the untouchable girl in Mahatmaji's family as a member was too much of a shock to the domestic circle, and for a time it created a spirit of revolt against Mahatmaji But Mahatmaji was quite prepared to renounce family kindred, and all for the sake of the untouchable girl He looked at her as for him the representative of the untouchable population of India Mahatmaji therefore felt that his attitude towards Lakshmi, and his treatment of her, must serve as an object lesson to all of his close identification and sympathy with the down-trodden race of untouchables in India

There has been a good deal of conflicting views in the country as to what exactly was Mahatmaji's intention when he spoke of removal of untouchability There are some who believe that by raising the cry, Mahatmaji wanted at heart to lay the axe at the very root of the system of caste in India But there are others who hold differently, and take it as nothing else than as a mere diplomatic cry to serve not a social but a political purpose Before the advent of Mahatmaji into the Indian political arena, there were social reformers who wanted to destroy the system of caste, these naturally fell into the error of imagining that Mahatmaji when he launched his campaign against untouchability must have had the same object as theirs in view My belief is that for Mahatmaji the removal of untouchability has nothing to do with the initiation of any changes in the existing system of dining and marriage among the Hindus. The

reader must be aware of the views expressed by Mahatmaji on this very subject at Tinnevelly to a leader of the untouchable community Then again, the reader might remember that when he returned to the Ashram after his All India tour, and Mr Rajagopalachary had put him the very same question, Mahatmaji had similarly expressed himself against interference with the existing social rules regarding inter-caste dining and inter-caste marriages At Delhi, a little before the time we are speaking of, an inter-caste dinner had been held with great eclat through the initiative of a Depressed Classes Mission, and under the auspices of the Arya Samaj In reference to this when letters from orthodox Hindus began to pour in, I thought it my duty to place the matter before Mahatmaji and I found that he was grieved and disappointed that people should have come to believe that he had identified himself with the movement in favour of inter-dining and inter-marriage He said to me,—"If people should persist in distorting my views in the manner they are doing, I am helpless" Then, later on at the time of the Ahmedabad Congress a similar inter caste dinner was held, and when letters of protest from representatives of the Hindu community from different parts of the country began to reach him, I had again to place the matter before him His reply was that neither had he been consulted about the dinner nor had he attended it But he also told me that his information was that at the dinner only food fried in *ghee* was served which, according to Guzarati custom, was not objectionable

I have observed that rules regarding eating, etc, such as obtains among the more orthodox Hindus, are not strictly followed at the Ashram But whether they are

in consonance with local customs prevailing in Guzarat, or whether they are at variance, and if so, to what extent, I am not in a position definitely to say I have, however, marked that Mahatmaji is in agreement with the strictly orthodox class of Hindus in commending the system of "self-cooking," i e, eating food cooked by one's own hands as being superior to eating food cooked by other's hands Therefore when any of the Ashram inmates had to stay away from the Ashram on some business or other Mahatmaji would have them cook their own food But at the Ashram itself, since all had to submit to a common code of conduct and follow a common ideal, Mahatmaji thought that that rule might, without detriment, be kept in abeyance In the matter of his own food, I have observed him following the orthodox rule of *Uchhista* * He accepts the scriptural rule about the purity of your food as an aid to the purity of your mind But he holds equally strongly that if your object be not spiritual, if your object be not to keep the mind pure, but on the contrary, if the object is merely the assertion of your superiority (in point of birth) as against the lower-born castes, then the observance of restrictions in the matter of food and drink, however much it might wear an air of religious authority, is irreligious at the core On the other hand, Mahatmaji holds with the whole strength of his heart that the ideal of self-restraint and self-discipline, which is at the foundation of the whole of the Hindu system must be maintained at all costs. Therefore, if anything happened

* The rule is that you must not eat the leavings or the remains of another's meal, that is to say,—any food which has partly been partaken of by another, nor any food which has come in contact with such food From which it follows that you cannot eat off a common plate with others

to loosen its hold on the Hindu mind, there would be nobody, I imagine, who would feel the situation so acutely as Mahatmaji Therefore, holding, as Mahatmaji does, that the system of self-restraint and self-discipline which forms the corner-stone of the Hindu social structure must be kept unimpaired and undiminished,—he has never cherished any thought of destroying the system of the four-fold caste Nor has he for the very same reason supported inter-caste dinners and inter-caste marriages as appropriate measures of social reform

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST THREE DAYS AT THE ASHRAM

The best part of the last two months had been spent in the company of Mahatmaji in railway trains in travelling, or making halts, now at one city, now at another, then at a third, and so on in rapid succession Now having arrived at the Ashram and breathing its larger air I began to feel how very narrowing and cramping had been the influence of that life in trains on my spirits Here I felt the invigorating breath of life and my spirits revived On all sides stretching into the far distance was a vast, open plain, and the soft breeze unpolluted by the dirt and filth of the city acted like a balm Even like a long imprisoned bird just released, I began to breathe more freely and gave myself up to the joys of my new-found liberty The moment I set foot in the Ashram, dear friend Surendraji came and welcomed me and took me to his room, and assumed the role of my guardian, ministering to my personal wants and comforts After having obtained from him an idea of the things and objects in the Ashram worth seeing, I was wandering about, when I came upon Mahatmaji returning from his bath On seeing me he asked in Hindi how I liked the Ashram, to which I replied, "Jagah bahut achha hai" (the place is very good, indeed) He was very glad to hear this, and emphasised my view by saying, "Bahut achhi Jagah hai", with a special stress on "bahut" (very), and then left I then understood that I had murdered Hindi

grammar by using *achha* (masculine) instead of *achhi* (feminine) before "Jagah" (place)

On the day we arrived (6th October) the Ashram prayer-meeting was held with great eclat Besides the usual congregation consisting of the inmates of the Ashram, there was a large gathering of people from the city itself (Ahmedabad), who had come to join in that day's prayers At the conclusion of the prayer meeting a report was read out of the amount of yarn spun and cloth woven by the inmates in the course of their day's work Mahatmaji followed the report with close attention Then he discoursed in Gujarati at considerable length on the spinning-wheel and the hand-loom, and finished by explaining at some length how the work of the movement was to be carried on in the event of his arrest To all this the audience listened with eager and breathless attention

The evening was a little too advanced and a fall of darkness was hanging round when the prayer assembly dispersed Mahatmaji returned to his room from the prayer, but sallied out again for a ramble with a bamboo stick about three cubits long in his hand He was walking fast, and the night was dark so Devadas followed him with hurried steps with a lantern in hand I was observing that there had been a greater air of cheerfulness about Mahatmaji since his return to the Ashram

None has any definite duties to do at the Ashram after the evening prayer Everybody has to eat his last meal before the sun went down and then join the prayer Seeing that Mahatmaji had left for his stroll, I repaired to Surendraji's cottage for the night The bell, again, rang out at four in the early morning, and the inmates assem-

bled again at the prayer meeting and began chanting in chorus the hymns When this was over, Mahatmaji spoke a few words of exhortation on the need for cultivating a spirit of loneliness for purposes of self-realisation. He explained that such loneliness could not be had merely by retiring into forest glades But if we could detach ourselves in spirit from worldly attractions, then indeed could we hope to feel and realise a real loneliness, even though we might be living and moving among men Not being able to understand Gujarati well enough, I tried as best I could to follow the trend of Mahatmaji's teachings with such intelligent insight as I was capable of I was beginning to feel how very inconvenient it was to have thus to depend upon my unaided powers

It was quite a task to keep Mahatmaji's records, correspondence and other papers so arranged that there should be no difficulty in finding them whenever wanted Jamnadas having left for Rajkot, I wanted to know definitely about my duties, and so in the morning of the 7th October, I approached Mahatmaji for instructions He said, "I will first speak to Devadas, and then divide the work between you two" On the second day, there arrived guests at the Ashram, Mr Stokes from Bombay, Mr Jairamdas of Sindh, and Mr Ramachandra Rao of the Andhra country, and some others The skill and promptitude with which Devadas discharged the duties of hospitality simply charmed me Mr Rao had a question to put He said to Mahatmaji,— "In the Gita, Shree Krishna enjoined Arjuna to go and fight with his opponents, while you are preaching a non-violent fight Is there a way of reconciling these two attitudes?" Mahatmaji simply said,—"This is a question

often put to me, and I have answered it many a time. Devadas will tell you all about it He knows " After a short while, however, he himself explained the matter briefly thus "The Gita is really a philosophical work Deep down in man's nature is a war going on, it is the higher and the lower in man perpetually battling for mastery The Gita only gives, in the form of a story, the exhortation of the Universal Soul (Paramatman) to the Individual Soul (Jivatman) to fight and destroy the lower life and thus to establish the ascendency of the higher or the spiritual element, to assert the supremacy of the soul-life of man " On another occasion, some other person put to him a similar question as follows —"You consider it a sin to kill, but it was Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru who organised the Sikhs into a community for merely fighting purposes If so, must it be said that the tenth Guru put a premium on Adharma or irreligion?" Mahatmaji answered thus — "The privilege which rightly belongs to a highly developed soul like Guru Govind Singh must not be claimed by us, ordinary mortals If we must follow in his steps, we must in the first instance seek to realise his high level of spirituality " What I understood from Mahatmaji's brief answer was as follows —

"In Mahatmaji's opinion ordinary men and women, standing as they do on the lower levels of spirituality, must in every single act of theirs try to discriminate between the rightness and the wrongness of that act, and then eschew the wrongful act Otherwise by the doing of sinful acts, the inner life of man would grow more and more impure; while at the same time the results of such impurity would be seen in pain and suffering When, however, the heart

of any spiritual aspirant gets thoroughly purified of evil, the power of evil no longer holds him in bondage Therefore the taint of evil having gone out of him, he is incapable of harbouring any evil thought or feeling, and, consequently, he becomes incapable of doing any act with an evil intent Therefore, conversely, no action done by him could possibly affect his heart or mind evilly Hence it is clear that the rule of judgment which must hold good in the case of ordinary mortals whose hearts are impure and who live impure lives and who have therefore to be purified of evil must not be made applicable in the case of exalted souls whose hearts have already been purged of evil "

The next day as usual there was the evening prayer After it was over Mahatmaji calling out names made friendly enquiries of each inmate of the Ashram present In course of conversation, he made such humorous hits that he set the whole audience in a roar of laughter Then instead of delivering any exhortation himself, he requested Mr Stokes to deliver a sermon Thus the prayer-meeting was over, and he went out for a stroll as on the previous evening Then, in the early morning of the 8th October, the third day of our stay, a well known Bengali song composed by the Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore was sung in course of the prayer The song had an enthrilling effect on the audience, and even after the singing was over Mahatmaji continued to remain motionless in his seat, and it was only after some time had elapsed that he rose, and with slow steps walked to his room without delivering his sermon He would not want to interfere with the deep spiritual effect of the song by any words of exhortation of his

About an hour after, when it was day-break, I went

and took my seat near him His first words were that everyday, and for a fixed period, I must make it a rule to spin Then he said that it was necessary also to practise carding cotton, which I should do at spare times Here "Ba" brought in Mahatmaji's breakfast, and as he went on sipping his milk, he asked me to read out to him a couple of articles contributed by Mr. Stokes to the *Independent* newspaper They were going to be published in book-form, and it was Mr Stokes' desire that Mahatmaji should write a "Foreword" to it The breakfast over, Mahatmaji was going to write it, when Miss Anasuya Ben entered with an English gentleman from the City This gentleman was private tutor to the children of Mr Ambalal Sarabhai, Cotton Mill-owner of Ahmedabad, and brother of Miss Anasuya Ben After a short talk with him Mahatmaji deputed me to show him round the Ashram The gentleman was so nice, simple and quiet that I easily felt drawn towards him He also was pleased with me, and asked what I was "I am one of Mahatmaji's humble attendants' -was my reply He then brought out his Kodak from his pocket and took snapshots of different parts of the Ashram Returning he approached Mahatmaji for permission to take a snapshot of him also. Mahatmaji said, -' If you ask for my permission, I can't give it, because I have definitely made up my mind not to give a sitting But I will not prevent you from taking a snapshot of me, if you so desire, provided you do it without attracting my notice, or interfering with my work ' Mahatmaji then resumed his writing, and the gentleman took his snapshot

A certain photographer of Bombay was present there at the time, who having heard all that Mahatmaji was saying

did not leave the Ashram as he had intended, but stayed for a few days taking photos of Mahatmaji in his various postures Finding that the gentleman was so persistent in his efforts, Mahatmaji one day told him with a laugh,—"I tell you, you can't take an exact likeness of me, in fact, nobody has so far succeeded in reproducing my figure My form is never constant, it undergoes various transformations in the course of the day" The meaning of this was not clear to me at the time But since then having lived with Mahatmaji uninterruptedly a long time I have come to observe that his appearance does not indeed continue the same at all times Sometimes he has appeared to me like a youngman of twenty-five, pursuing his work with infinite and indomitable energy At other times, again, his look has been that of an octogenarian, a shrivelled figure, bent with the weight of years What is at the bottom of all these fluctuations, I cannot definitely say But I guess that the particles of his body may have become so pure and so shorn of grossness as to lend themselves to ready changes in response to the changes of feeling within It is as though his body has become a perfect mirror reflecting the feelings of his heart

At 10 O'clock on the morning of 7th October, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mr. Vithalbhai Patel (the elder Patel) called on Mahatmaji, and had a discussion with him about the likelihood of Government arresting him Mahatmaji said that the only thing that stood in the way of the Government arresting him was their fear of forfeiting the sympathies and support of the Moderates and so they were hesitating Lalaji and Mr Patel, however, would not accept that view It seemed that neither of these leaders reposed the least

CHAPTER XI

TO BOMBAY AGAIN

Mahatmaji left for Bombay again on the night of Saturday, the 18th October This time Devadas and I accompanied him as personal assistants Devadas was to me an excellent teacher to whom I could speak out on any matter with absolutely no hesitation He was quick and prompt in everything, and equally pleased if others did their work with equal promptitude With Mahatmaji went also Lala Lajpat Rai Mr Rajagopalachary, Mr Ramachandra Rao, and Mr Mahadev Desai I passed the night in the train with Mr Mahadev For him, I felt, poetry had a real fascination He kept me awake till midnight reading out various poems, and explaining their beauties I listened with real pleasure, and although our conversation did not last long enough, yet methinks its sweet memory is not likely to pass away soon

It was eleven next morning when we reached Bombay Shortly after we had arrived at our lodging, Mr Jinnah came in for an interview with Mahatmaji He had fixed up the hour previously by a wire Mahatmaji was wearing only his loin-cloth which did not reach down to the knee, the rest of his body being bare Mr Jinnah was dressed in European fashion from head to foot The two stood face to face and shook hands Here a voice from behind was heard saying in low tones, 'What a great contrast!" The

interview was long and private, at the conclusion of which Mr Jinnah left

At six in the evening a monster mass meeting was held near the Elphinstone mills I accompanied Devadas there Mahatmaji had previously arrived As soon as Mahatmaji had entered the place the entrance gate was closed, and there could be no entry for us About a hundred thousand people had assembled and the difficulties of the volunteers in preserving order were tremendous, and could hardly be appreciated by people who had never had a hand in tackling such gatherings It became impossible at times for the volunteers to keep their temper Both of us had platform tickets, and were therefore entitled to seats on the dais, but we were refused admittance We should have been spared all trouble if Devadas only chose to disclose his identity, but he would not He had modesty, intelligence and forbearance and he took to the more dilatory method of arguing and remonstrating with the volunteers until he succeeded in securing admittance on the strength of his ticket alone Devadas's deliberate abstention from demanding preferential treatment as Mahatmaji's son awakened in me a feeling of genuine admiration for him We entered, and saw in front of us to the right of us, to the left of us, as far as eye could reach, rows of people in never ending succession arranged in semi-circles A little to the left of the platform was standing a huge pile of foreign cloth Mahatmaji proposed for the acceptance of the meeting the Resolution passed by the Working Committee only a few days before at Bombay (i e , on the 5th October), calling upon the soldiers, the police, and all other Government servants, to resign He declared that by so doing, he was

there openly committing the very same offence for which the Ali Brothers were being then prosecuted,* and he therefore, called upon the Government to arrest him He declared also that those who seconded or supported that Resolution, or who by their presence at that meeting showed their sympathy with the Resolution should be placed under arrest

Mahatmaji then made a special appeal to the public that there should be no secret preaching to troops to incite them to revolt He declared that in this non-violent movement all secret conspiracy was ruled out as opposed to its very nature The rule was, he said, that if you could not make an open declaration of your object, you were not entitled to go about and preach it in private

In the Working Committee's Resolution, there was an appeal to those who would leave Government service to take to the spinningwheel, the handloom, and the business of Khaddar as a means of earning their livelihood. Referring to this part of the Resolution Mahatmaji declared his unalterable conviction that the wheel and the loom were capable of eradicating the grinding poverty of the millions. Further more, spinning weaving and Khaddar organisation throughout the country would afford ample opportunities for people to make an honourable living, that is to say, without having to sell their independence by accepting service under the Government Mahatmaji said that there was a good deal of truth in Maulana Mahomed Ali's statement that in the present struggle, non-co-operators had no need for bullets or gunpowder, the handspun yarn was their bullet, and the spinning wheel, their machine gun

* Vide Appendix

But the people had not taken to Khaddar with sufficient zest, and had not yet succeeded in putting a stop to the imports of foreign cloth Even while Mahatmaji was saying these words in mournful tones, his eyes filled with tears, and with moist eyes he went on thus —"A year ago I said that Swaraj could be won in the course of this one year, but the year is out and yet Swaraj is not won A year ago I placed before the country a definite programme of work, it has not been properly carried out How am I to convince my people that this sort of partial fulfilment would not take us to the goal? How shall I bring home to my lawyer-brothers that Indian law-courts cannot give people the justice they stand in need of, and that, therefore, it is not proper to go and appear before such courts? I have not practised sufficient hardships and penances to earn for me the spiritual strength to make people grasp the truth of my statements For lack of such strength I could not make college students feel in their heart of hearts the wrongness of continuing their studies in Government institutions Nor even in this city of Bombay have I succeeded in bringing home to its men and women the need of a full acceptance of the message of Khaddar. To me personally this is a matter of the sorest grief But I must forbear dwelling upon this personal aspect of my suffering For I have still hopes of Swaraj within the allotted time if people should all whole-heartedly take to the wheel and the handloom, and begin to produce their own Khaddar So long as the spread of Khaddar in the country does not come up to the mark, I must not take upon myself the responsibility of starting mass Civil Disobedience I am but an ordinary mortal full of failings

God alone is free from error Nevertheless I have intelligence enough not to repeat the blunder which I committed in 1919 by starting Civil Disobedience without adequate preparations The practice of Civil Disobedience is a mode of wrestling, with whose arts and expedients difficulties and intricacies, I am thoroughly conversant I know that it is a weapon of irresistible power, but I know also its potency for mischief, if it could not be properly wielded As long as the popular mind is not fully awakened to the need for following the non violent path in their struggle for freedom, so long the exercise of Civil Disobedience must remain in abeyance We have first of all to make sure how far there has been this awakening of the non-violent spirit among us, and how far also Hindu-Moslem Unity has gained in strength But the way to have a clear perception of what progress the nation has been making in these two directions would be by ascertaining how far there has been a spread of the spinning wheel and of Khaddar among the general body of our people When the spinning wheel has found a secure anchor in our hearts, there will be no longer any fear of people leaving the ways of peace for those of violence in the pursuit of Swaraj "

In the course of his speech Mahatmaji referred to the fact that there were so many people who shed tears of grief because they were unable to bear the sight of his appearing before them in loin-cloth On this he remarked -
"So far as I am concerned, I do not stand in need of the least bit of sympathy But I have just returned from a visit to several districts in the Andhra province, where a terrible famine is raging Some of their women, it has been

reported to me unable to bear the pangs of hunger, have ended their lives and the lives of their children by drowning Such is the heart rending condition of our people If this should strike a sympathetic chord in the hearts of us all, and we all take to the spinning wheel and Khaddar, then only should it be possible for me to give up my loin-cloth, and go back to my former dress I am about to set fire to the yonder pile of foreign-cloth, but there is also a fire raging within my breast and the fire I am going to light is but an outer expression of the fire that is consuming me within "

Mahatmaji concluded his speech by a reference to Lokamanya Tilak in the following terms -To appreciate the greatness of Lokamanya, we need not ransack the pages of his *Geeta-Rahasya* He could sum up Lokamanya's Geeta-teachings in one sentence "Swaraj is our birthright" That one sentence of Lokamanya Tilak expressed the very heart of Lokamanya s teachings - of all that he lived for, all that he struggled for That, however was but the first half of the Tilak-Geeta, and Mahatmaji wanted to supply the other half It i that "Swaraj is attainable only through the spinning-wheel" A combination of these two statements would supply the root idea of the Tilak Geeta, i e , of Swaraj Shastr

The huge gathering was greatly moved when they looked at Mahatmaji's sad countenance and his eyes suffused with tears, and they sat still listening in mournful silence After Mahatmaji, Lalaji rose and spoke in thundering tones Those of our countrymen who by their voluntary co-operation with the Government were helping to strengthen the chains of political dependence, and those again who

would not, for the sake of Swaraj, consent to take to Khaddar as their wear,—to both of these two classes of our people Lalaji applied words of severe condemnation Lalaji was followed by Maulana Azad Sobhani, and Babu Rajendra Prasad, the great Bihar leader Both delivered powerful, inspiring speeches

Soon after this, Mahatmaji set the pile of foreign cloth alight, and left That huge mass burst into flames simultaneously with loud explosions of crackers Devadas and I made our way out through the crowd as fast as we could, but still we could not come up with Mahatmaji So we took the tram, and it was late in the evening that we were able to reach our quarters, when Mahatmaji had already taken his Monday vow of silence Then his bed was made, and he lay down, and began reading Poet Rabindranath Tagore's article "The Call of Truth", which had appeared in the month's issue of the *Modern Review* of Calcutta (October 1921) Then, there was another article, "Gandhi and Tagore" in the *Calcutta Review*, a copy of which had been left with Mahatmaji by Mrs Naidu and to which she had specially drawn his attention This also Mahatmaji read, keeping awake far into the night

Nothing was now being heard about Mahatmaji's arrest, and I thought that nothing like that was going to happen in the near future Since coming here, however, the rumour reached us that Mr. Setalvad, the Indian Member of the Executive Council of the Bombay Government, was opposed to Mahatmaji's arrest and was fighting against the Bombay Government. Another rumour that reached our ears was that the Government of India had asked for permission for his arrest from the higher

authorities in England, and was awaiting the sanction of the Secretary of State

The next day (Monday, 10th October) was mostly spent by Mahatmaji in writing an article under the caption, "The Great Sentinel", in reply to the Poet His work was being interrupted by the arrival of visitors, the most important of whom were Mrs. Naidu, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Mr Khadilkar, the Mahratta leader Each of them took up a considerable portion of his time When, however, his article was completed, he gave it to me to read with instructions that I must try to find out if any points had been left unanswered By way of enquiry, he wrote also the following —"I hope you have read the Poet's article" When I replied "No", he was a little surprised I, therefore, hastened to tell him that this very article in its Bengali original had been read out previously by the Poet at a public meeting in Calcutta, and I was aware of the Poet's main arguments and points of view This satisfied him Mahatmaji's reply contained an exposition of some of his inmost sentiments and convictions in language which deeply touched my heart It was not for me to pass any judgment, one way or another, upon his articles nevertheless on one or two previous occasions I had had to criticise him, but that was only because I had to obey him In this case, however, I had absolutely nothing to say By my cheerfulness, and by my gestures, however, I could easily convey to him my feelings about the article which appeared to me to be flawless Then he directed me to send the article to the post, and gave me also some "Notes" for *Young India* to be sent along with the former Almost the whole day I had been with him, and yet I had not noticed when he had made

time to pen those "Notes" His power of rapid composition took me by surprise

The same day Mr. Mahadev left for Allahabad. Before he left, Mahatmaji had sent for him, and asked him a number of questions in writing Mr Jamnalal Bajaj also was to leave for Cawnpore by the 10 P M train He came at 6-30 P M to take leave of Mahatmaji, and at the time of leaving told me that I must not neglect to keep him informed by wire or by post about happenings Mr Rajagopalachary also left for Madras the same evening

The whole of Tuesday (11th October) till 10 P M was spent in Bombay Then we left for Surat by train Maulana Azad Sobhani accompanied Mahatmaji There were only two minutes left for the train to start when we reached the Grant Road Station (Bombay) Devadas hurried away to purchase the tickets I put all the luggage on the head of a porter except such small articles as I could manage with my own hands At this Mahatmaji stretched out both hands and said, "Give me also something to carry" offering to relieve me But I would not allow him to carry any luggage He, however, kept following me, watching if in the hurry I should leave anything behind, or if I should require any assistance to put the things in the train Devadas and I together managed to do the whole work quickly enough, and so he had not to come to our assistance But his eagerness to help us was really very touching I now got into a third class compartment, but it was so very crowded that there was no sitting room and I kept standing One of the passengers seeing me in that plight came forward with the offer that I might use his bed in the upper bunk Afterwards Devadas came in search of me with my

bedding on his shoulder, but I was asleep and he went away without disturbing me. The more I came to see of Devadas, the more attracted I was feeling towards him on account of his manifold virtues

CHAPTER XII

SURAT

Before it was sunrise on the morning of Wednesday the 12th October, we reached Surat It had been arranged that Mahatmaji should be first taken to a particular place in the vicinity of the station, where he was to take rest for some time So from the station, Mahatmaji proceeded thither escorted by a large throng of people He would have his breakfast and would also finish some of his work there, after which he was to be taken in procession through the city to the other end of it, a distance of some three miles, and was to be lodged at the "Swaraj Ashram" there Devadas stayed behind to look after Mahatmaji, while I took charge of the luggage and made direct for the "Swaraj Ashram"

On my way, I saw that in honour of Mahatmaji's visit, the city had been decorated and made clean and tidy and that large bodies of people clad in Khaddar were wending their way to the station, group after group in regular succession Devadas had already apprised me of the fact that nowhere else in India would Khaddar be found so largely in evidence as here at Surat From the hurrying steps of the people and the gala dress which they wore, I was led to imagine that something out of the common was going to take place But I noticed no signs of commotion or disorder In Bengal, under similar circumstances, the people issuing out of their homes would have paraded the streets in bands, shouting, singing and playing music,

and thrown the whole city into a state of delirious excitement. Here also the people were out in the streets in bands, but they were going about noiselessly. Only one noticed on the roads, drummers stationed at intervals, to proclaim by beat of drum the auspicious tidings of Mahatmaji's presence in the city

While traversing the main thoroughfare of the city old historical associations began to crowd into my mind. This is that great city, thought I, where the mighty Sourashtra* had incarnated itself, and shone resplendent for centuries There are cycles in the history of every country, and these must leave in natural course their imprint on its breast Thus Bombay, born only the other day, and not yet arrived at maturity now proudly walks the earth towering above Surat But the present cycle will have its day and the power of modern Bombay sunk beneath the waves of time will then have passed into oblivion So shall Surat rejuvenated reappear bearing in her hands the banner of victory and of her ancient glory I could see from the train the old fort of Surat and its surrounding wall and moat I cannot tell on what different occasions, what invading armies had been beaten back by it No one can tell by what sad irony of fate, Mother Earth has here become girdled by a double chain of iron The result has been that a heavy weight now sits on Surat's bosom, and Surat's ancient wall, its moat and fort still standing, all have become idle curiosities, arresting only the passing gaze of the traveller At that time my imagination pictured before myself the railway line that ran by the wall of the fort of Surat as a veritable

* The name Surat comes from the name Sourashtra of which it is but a corrupted form.

chain of iron that had bound her body, and the large station itself as a huge block of stone weighing heavily on her bosom with its massive weight

Here at Surat the English when they first came into this country during the days of Moghul rule established themselves and built their first factory Who could have dreamt 250 years ago that the descendants of the handful of English traders who were then living in that factory were destined in course of time to become the undisputed political masters of this vast continent of India ? Just as it is not possible to conceive of a huge banyan tree coming out of a tiny banyan seed, so also the mind refuses to believe that there could possibly be any sort of connection between that tiny British establishment at Surat and the present mighty British Government of India But it is part of God's dispensation that the impossible should be made possible, and the present instance was a case in point

I found at Surat one remarkable illustration of the survival of an old western fashion I had it from Devadas that the English musical band of Surat enjoyed a great reputation on the Guzarat side of India If any marriage had to be celebrated with eclat, the Surat band was an indispensable factor The costume of these bandsmen is an exact replica of what one sees in pictures of fashionably dressed English gentlemen of the 16th and 17th centuries. There was the same tall hat, the same striped coat, multicoloured like what you find on the body of a Zebra, while the cut of the coat was what had obtained in England three centuries ago. Naturally, the thought crossed my mind that we, Indians, were in very truth a conservative people For while style and fashion in the matter of dress

have undergone and are undergoing continual transformation in England, the Indian bandsmen of Surat have been true to their traditions of dress, looking like living pictures of English people of the days of old Moghul rule

While I was recalling these historical associations connected with Englishmen in India, the story of the sack of Surat by Sivaji, the rising sun of Maharashtra, came back to my memory Thus with my mind filled with visions of the past and the future, I proceeded on my way and at length found myself at the "Swaraj Ashram" This Ashram is known also as the "Pattidar Boarding" The Pattidars are a distinct community in Guzarat, and it was with their support that the Ashram was maintained Forty young men were then undergoing their training for national service there The Ashram, standing, as it did in the midst of a grove of trees far from the bustle of the city, made me feel as if I had arrived at some rural spot Not far from here was another Ashram known as the "Anavil Boarding", which is maintained by the Anavil community of Guzarati Brahmans Mr Dayalji, the head of the "Anavil Boarding", was also the President of the District Congress Committee of Surat, whose Secretary was Mr Kalyanji, the Director of the Pattidar Boarding" Mr Dayalji having gifted away his all to the Tilak Swaraj Fund he had nothing to call his own, and was now devoting himself heart and soul to the cause of the country Under his able guidance, and with the collaboration of whole-hearted national workers headed by Mr Kalyanji, the District of Surat had become a model centre of non-co-operation activities.

Some two or three hours after I had arrived at the Ashram,

Mahatmaji came with Maulana Azad Sobhani and Devadas, escorted by a large company There was a spacious, well-kept hall in the Ashram known as the "Prarthana Mandir" or Prayer Hall There immediately after his arrival Mahatmaji betook himself Then, opening his portfolio he began some writing work, and continued doing so for some time, after which he went out to a large Mussalman village on the outskirts of the city When a little before sunset I arrived with Devadas at a big mass-meeting that was being held on a bank of the river Tapti, I found that Mahatmaji had already returned from the village and was actually addressing the audience It was a monster gathering of some fifty-thousand people In whatever direction I cast my eyes, I could see only Khaddar caps and Khaddar shirts. Never before had I seen such a vast assemblage of people clad only in Khaddar This factor lent to the meeting an air of such solemnity and sacredness as baffles description Though I could not fully understand Mahatmaji's speech, as it was in Guzarati, yet I could gather that he no longer favoured such mass-meetings He was more anxious that steps should be taken now to establish Khaddar centres in every village For so long as the masses did not give sufficient evidence of having that knowledge, that devotion, and that singleness of purpose which followed on a whole-hearted acceptance of his message of Khaddar, so long was it not possible for Mahatmaji to advance along the road to mass civil disobedience Devadas and I returned to our quarters before the close of the meeting as we had to make preparations for our departure Shortly after, Mahatmaji and the Maulana Saheb arrived, and we started for Sabarmati that very night

CHAPTER XIII

PREPARING TO BID FAREWELL—I

Mahatmaji returned to the Ashram on the morning of the 13th October, and stayed till the very end of the month. Then he left for Delhi on the 1st November, in order to attend the meetings of the All-India Congress Working Committee and All-India Congress Committee to be held there on the 3rd and the 4th respectively These nineteen days (13 October 31 October) were days of seclusion passed at the Ashram Nevertheless we shall find that the seclusion was not all seclusion, but that Mahatmaji had been planning schemes of action of far reaching import. For in those nineteen days were sown seeds of events which in time gave a new direction to the whole movement The reader knows that on the 4th October the All-India leaders had met at Bombay and signed a Leaders' Manifesto, as it was called, declaring " the inherent right of everyone to express his opinion without restraint about the propriety or otherwise of citizens offering their services to, or remaining in the employ of, the Government, whether in the civil or the military department," without being held guilty of tampering with the loyalty of soldiers or other Government servants This Manifesto was published at Bombay on the 5th October Since then Mahatmaji had been working steadily towards Mass Civil Disobedience So arriving at the Ashram he began to utilise every opportunity of making clear to the members the underlying principles of civil disobedience,

and the goal to which it leads It was at this time that Messrs. Dayalji and Kalyanji of Surat came to invite Mahatmaji to visit the Bardoli Taluqua, and informed him that in their opinion the Taluqua had acquired the necessary competance to launch on a campaign of mass civil disobedience This was a very important circumstance as we shall see In the meantime, having resolved in his own mind that the time for coming to grips with the Government was rapidly approaching, Mahatmaji deemed it necessary gently to break to the fellow-workers and members of the Ashram that the hour for parting would soon arrive, and that therefore they must prepare for the final act of leave-taking Already he had conceived in his mind of a definite scheme for starting Civil Disobedience This he was going to place before the All-India Congress Committee at its coming session at Delhi

In the meanwhile an unforeseen difficulty had presented itself Mr Vijayaraghavachari, the venerable President of the Nagpur Congress (held in previous December) started the difficulty He enjoyed universal esteem for his intense devotion to the country's cause Advanced in years, he did not fall in with the Moderates, who favoured the policy of following the lead of the Government in matters political. Nor was he an out-and-out supporter of Mahatmaji in advocating a policy of non-co-operation This was apparent at the Nagpur Congress itself This difference of outlook between him and the non-co-operating leaders began to manifest itself in various ways The executive powers of the Congress were entrusted in the first instance to the All-India Congress Committee (A I C C) when the Congress was not in session Then under the rules passed by the last

preceding Congress, a small Committee called the All-India Congress Working Committee which was to meet more frequently had been empowered to transact business as the Executive of the A I C C when the latter body was not in session Now this Working Committee in the exercise of its powers as the executive of the A I C C had convened a meeting of the All India Congress Committee on the 4th November at Delhi Mr Vijayaraghavachari, the Congress President, and ex-officio President of the A I C C, thought it his duty to veto the proposed A I C C meeting This led to a keen controversy in the public press between him and Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Secretary of the Congress, as to the respective powers and privileges of the President and the Working Committee,—a controversy which has become memorable in the annals of the Congress While the controversy was going on, a number of telegraphic messages having been received by Mahatmaji from the President, Mahatmaji instructed me to send the same to Pandit Motilalji for his private information It transpired afterwards that Pandit Motilalji had printed and circulated them among the members of the A I C C This was a matter of great regret to Mahatmaji, who had never intended that a private correspondence should be made public in that way As early as 13th October, Motilalji had apprised Mahatmaji of the President' having vetoed the proposed meeting of the A I C C To this Mahatmaji had wired briefly the reply —"I suggest courteous ignoring President's word" That was what ultimately resulted at the meeting of the A I C C, in spite of the heated discussions and controversies over it in the public press. The President, Mr Vijayaraghavachari, of course, did not put in

an appearance, but nothing untoward happened in consequence

Meantime, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, had an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Reading, at Simla He arrived at the Ashram on the 22nd October to have a consultation with Mahatmaji Lord Reading had arranged that the Prince of Wales should visit India and set foot on Indian soil at Bombay on 17th November (1921), and he was determined that at whatever cost the visit must be made an unqualified success The Viceroy had made up his mind that there should be a grand popular demonstration in favour of the Prince In Mahatmaji's opinion, and that of the Congress Executive, however the visit had a deep political object, and the Congress Working Committee was determined to frustrate Lord Reading's plans The Committee had accordingly definitely proclaimed by a Resolution* that "on the day of the landing of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales there should be a general hartal throughout India, and as to the effective boycott of any public welcome to His Royal Highness during his visit to the different cities of India, the Working Committee leaves the arrrangements in the hands of the respective Provincial Congress Committees" The reason for proposing to withhold the Indian peoples' welcome to his Royal Highness was no disloyalty to the Royal House or to the Throne This had been made clear by the A I C C in the following Resolution passed at Bombay on 28th July 1921 —"The All-India Congress Committee desires to place on record its opinion that India bears no sort of feeling against the person of His Royal Highness

* Resolution No 4 passed at Bombay on 5th October, 1921

and that this advice to refrain from participating in or assisting in any welcome to His Royal Highness or any functions organised officially or otherwise in connection with this visit,—is tendered because the Committee regards the proposed visit as a political move and calculated to give strength and support to a system of Government that has resulted in a breach of faith with the Mussalmans of India and atrocious injustice to the people of India as during the Martial Law days in 1919 in the Punjab and a system that is designed to keep India as long as possible from her birth-right of Swaraj " What, however, weighed with Lord Reading in persisting to bring to India His Royal Highness in spite of the growing unrest and discontent brought to a head by the Non-co operation movement, and in spite of the declared opposition of most of the Local Governments and Administrations of India was his Lordship's hope and belief that what had happened in India in 1905, when the present King Emperor, as Prince of Wales had visited this country, could be repeated this time also in India In other words, it was his Lordship s hope and belief that the Prince's visit would awaken once again the inborn, slumbering loyalty of the Indian masses, and that as a consequence the Indian millions forsaking Mahatma Gandhi and his non co-operating Congress would flock to the standard of the British Government Lord Reading, however, had ample opportunities of discovering in the course of the four or five weeks following upon the landing of the Prince at Bombay that the problem of tackling unrest and discontent in India was not to be so easily solved All that happened subsequently by means of negotiation to persuade Mahatma Gandhi and the non-co-operators to

withdraw their opposition to a welcome to the Prince had their genesis, it appears to me, in this visit of Pandit Malaviya This diplomatic effort however, failed, as will appear in another chapter

These days of Mahatmaji's stay at the Ashram (13 -31 October) were days clearly marked out, for they bring out the fact that events were marching steadily to a denouement I therefore present in the form of a diary a narrative of Mahatmaji's thoughts, sentiments and work during this period of his Ashram life It would show also the nature and extent of my connection with his daily life and activities This Diary has been culled from the letters that I wrote to my teacher, Mr Mukerji at the time, and, though every important incident or discourse might not have been entered, still, it would give a general idea of Mahatmaji's manner of life from day to day, and the ways of his thinking during the period in question

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13th October (1921)—I find him treating me with even greater kindness than before, since our return from Surat, the reason for which is not quite apparent to me I, too, have begun like others to address him as "Bapuji," and am solicitous even as a son, of his blessings It is part of his exalted character not to distribute his favours on grounds of high and low as between man and man As the fight is assuming more and more serious proportions, and the hour for employing the greatest weapon in the armoury of non-co-operators (mass civil disobedience) is drawing nearer and nearer, Mahatmaji seems to be developing a greater and greater reflectiveness, a greater and greater intentness

of spirit Every minute to him is now precious, not a single minute could be spared for idle talk I am simply astonished to see how hard he has been working The trial of the Ali Brothers is proceeding at Karachi Some of the people around Mahatmaji had been finding fault with them for their conduct in court and creating scenes Mahatmaji however said in support of the Brothers that such conduct would have one good effect, namely, that it would destroy the false prestige of the British Courts But he took care also to emphasise that for him such conduct would have been impossible For said he, "In my case it would be like a lamb before the sacrificial post "

In his *Young India* Mahatmaji has been saying very hard things of the Government, perhaps to draw upon himself the vials of Governmental wrath To me it seems that here there is the deep anguish of a distressed soul, pining to lay his head on the sacrificial altar in order that he may be beheaded, and the intended victim be, set free by the oppressor

On another occasion, speaking to a certain gentleman, Mahatmaji expressed himself thus —"I have heard that when once a serpent has bitten its victim, it has emptied itself of its whole quota of venom So I am working to the end that the Government might bite me, and pour out on my devoted head the whole of its venom and thus get freed from its poison."

Another day, Mahatmaji talked of *himsa* (violence), and the method of combating it " What is the root cause of *himsa* ? If there was no pleasure in it, none would indulge in it. When the tiger goes in pursuit of the lamb, the latter flees for its life ; and in most cases, wild beasts hunt inno-

cent animals merely in a spirit of sport, or for the pleasure of the chase Granted that between the tiger and the lamb there is an inborn relationship of the " eaten and the eater." But if it were possible for lambs, whenever they came in sight of tigers, to meet tigers face to face without any fear in their hearts, then in no time could the latter be cured of their propensity to attack the former This British Government in India is fully equipped with a whole armoury of weapons enabling it at any moment to launch a campaign of killing An opportunity for doing so ministers to its spirit of militarism, and it feels immensely pleased and gratified The only way to put an end to or curb on, this propensity to fight would be for the people to cultivate a spirit of absolute fearlessness in its attitude towards the Government If this could be done, the pleasure derived by militarists from inflicting injury upon terrorised victims would no longer be felt Thus when the Government would no longer find scope for establishing its rule on the basis of organised violence, it would be bound to recognise that the only alternative left to it would be government according to the will of the people" I could now see why Mahatmaji is so much against secret violence I could see also why the success of mass civil disobedience is dependent equally on non-violence and absolute fearlessness on the part of civil resisters It is fearlessness of the highest order that can withstand a hail of bullets without getting demoralised or without succumbing to the temptation of retaliating

One day a professor from the National University of Guzarat came and put the following question to Mahatmaji:--"Bapuji, I wonder what could have suggested to you the

plan of offering resistance by way of non-violence The history of the world does not furnish a single instance of unarmed resistance, of resistance without violence From what events or experiences, or from what book did you first derive the idea of a non-violent mode of political warfare?"

Mahatmaji paused for a while, and then made the following answer —"It was in South Africa when that Pathan assaulted and stabbed me that the idea first struck me *"

The Professor —"That is very strange, indeed! If one assaults me, my instinctive impulse would be to retaliate and hit back How is it possible to wish well of one who inflicts an injury on me? My happiness would then lie in avenging the injury How should it be possible to feel happy when I have to bear a load of pain in my bosom? 'I am the lord, I am blessed'† —such sentiments seem to be quite natural to a human being"

Mahatmaji gave a patient hearing to the Professor, but his answer was brief —"Yes, you think so, and that is because in you the ego is too strong The ego in me is not so strong and my way of looking at the question is different"

On another day, I heard him saying —"I have been conserving all my *josh*." The two words *rosh* and *josh*

* This incident is worthy of special attention It throws abundant light on the true meaning of the doctrine of non-violent warfare as promulgated by Mahatma Gandhi Secondly, it affords evidence of the fact that it was from this time forward that he seriously thought about tackling the problem of Hindu-Moslem conflict.

† This is an English rendering of a scriptural statement in Sanskrit, wrongly interpreted here by the Professor

in Hindi are used by Mahatmaji in two distinct senses. *Rosh* is what is ordinarily known as anger, it is a selfish instinct requiring control But *josh* is a righteous form of energy called forth to defend truth and justice The energy of *rosh* is generated in the hearts of selfish people when they find some selfish end of theirs thwarted But the righteous form of energy, the energy of *josh*, is evolved in the hearts of unselfish people They see a fight going on between truth and untruth and feel the call to defeat untruth and re-instal Truth "

14th October—Maulana Azad Sobani of Cawnpur has accompained Mahatmaji to the Ashram from Bombay The Maulana has composed in Urdu a lengthy manifesto condemning the forced conversion of Hindus by the Moplahs of Malabar during the recent Moplah rebellion Mahatmaji has referred him to me to have it rendered into English Mahatmaji has given him to understand that there was no need to trouble about the matter as "Krishnadas would do it all right" The message is inordinately long, and, what is worse, written in high-flown Urdu I can hardly find my way through the tangle of words and phrases, and I am confronted with the problem of how to extract the vital parts of the message and write them out simply and lucidly

Having been occupied with the Maulana Saheb's work, I have hardly had any opportunities to day of going near Mahatmaji, I have peeped into his room, but have always found him surrounded by people, and always busy with his own work About six o'clock, I was cleaning my plate after the evening meal, when Surendraji came and informed me that I was wanted by Mahatmaji immediately, and he

offered to do the cleaning for me Thinking that there must be some work of special urgency for me, I made haste and soon presented myself before Mahatmaji, when he handed to me a lengthy registered letter, and asked me to tell him its substance The letter was from a Mussalman gentleman, and was an eanest appeal to Mahatmaji to accept the Islamic faith Mahatmaji's reply was short and as follows —" He (Mahatmaji) is a seeker after Truth The acceptance of a certain view of religion as true is not the same as discovering the truth for himself It is neccessary to strive unceasingly to discover the truth He (Mahatmaji) believes that the truth is not so easily attainable as the Mussalman brother thinks it is He (Mahatmaji) is of opinion that it is not attainable merely by subscribing to the truth of anv religious article in the manner in which the Mussalman brother has done " Then, he gave me several other letters which were to be filed and said,—"Considerable arrears of work have got to be disposed of and I have much to dictate to you " When he was speaking to me I suspected that he was not all well, and I enquired He said—"Yes, there is some slight fever, it is nothing much It will soon be off ' At intervals there were manifestations of bodily pain, which I could notice Just then the prayer bell rang out, and Mahatmaji rose and left for the prayer-meeting After the prayers, a car came for him from the city, and he drove away

I asked Devadas where he might be going with the fever on him "He is going to attend a meeting in the city" – was the reply So in spite of his fever he must attend the meeting There is a lot of writing to be done by him to-morrow, as he has told me, but he is unwell. It is

quite likely, therefore, that I shall have to be by his side the whole of tomorrow But I shall also have to finish the Maulana Saheb's work, and my clothes have all got dirty I shall have also to wash them with soap myself, according to the practice in the Ashram. There are neither servants nor washermen here

15th October—Today I had no time to do much writing The Maulana Saheb sent me a reminder early in the morning for his paper, but he does not know that I do not possess the knack of rapid composition At noon Mahatmaji sent for me, and I was engaged with him till evening, writing letters, telegrams etc Apparently the fever has left him, as appears from his freer manner today This is October, but even now there are some indications of the approach of winter cold I hear that winter in Ahmedabad is severer than in Bengal

To-day I heard Mahatmaji telling some one—"The Gujaratis by their trade have been draining away Bengali wealth By so doing they are accumulating a great sin" The Bengalis lacking the commercial instinct, the Gujaratis have been steadily gaining predominance in Bengal in the field of trade and commerce This state of things, it appeared to me, was not to Mahatmaji's liking On another occasion Mahatmaji said to some one—"There are people who think I did not do the right thing when I gave up my practice as a barrister But what should it have availed me, if I continued practising as a barrister? I should have lost my health, and into the bargain I should have created an army of dependents living on my charity But having adopted the present mode of my life, I find that not a single member of the Gandhi family has turned an idler or a

loafer Every one is skilled in some kind of work or other So even considering the matter from a purely business point of view, there has been profit, and no loss "

16th October —I was fully occupied with work of various kinds the whole of yesterday, nevertheless I have been feeling rather lonely and dejected Here in this unfamiliar land, far away from my own people, and yet with people surrounding me on every side, I am feeling as if I was living a life of loneliness Mahatmaji s plan, it seems, is to go on heaping work on work, so that the mind might not wander about for want of occupation He believes that an effectual curb could be put upon one's mind if one is set to do spinning work on the charka Mahatmaji is convinced that those who desire to ennoble and purify their lives would do well to take to spinning as a spiritual exercise They would then discover for themselves that it is possible to gain therefrom a great deal of good in the way of mind-control and self-purification

From to-day a new system comes into being in our " Big Kitchen " Pyarilalji, Surendraji and " Bakoba " will henceforth cook each for himself and not have their meals from the " Big Kitchen " They will have also to do spinning and weaving for the best part of the day Mahatmaji is going to decide whether the country is ripe for civil disobedience by taking note of the spread of the spinning-wheel and the handloom , and he wishes his own family to carry out the system that he wants the whole country to follow He sent for me last evening, and said, "you must help " Ba " (Mrs Gandhi) in the kitchen work as far as you can , otherwise she would hardly be able to cope with it." I replied that I was ready to do my best He then enquired

if I was doing my spinning regularly, and if my health was all right &c

Mahatmaji is not now (afternoon) at the Ashram He has gone to attend a meeting of the Gujarat National College, and I am free These days I have ceased to report his speeches as he always addresses the audience in Gujarati, which I cannot quite follow Nor is there any real need for me to accompany Mahatmaji to meetings Here he is in the midst of his own people, and there are so many eager and anxious to do his bidding Devadas and I are not therefore called upon now to be in attendance upon him whenever he goes out Ever since I have been here I find that almost every evening after prayers he has been going to the city to attend some meeting or other

18th October -Woke up punctually at 4 in the morning, and spread out the carpet for the prayer meeting Immediately after prayers I spun for an hour and a half Last evening I was with Mahatmaji in his room till 9 30 P M I had to do so as yesterday was his "day of silence" All the time he was engaged in writing something This morning he revised it and gave it to me for despatch to the *Young India* office I found that it was all "Notes" for this week Then he handed to me several newspapers which I was to look over and from which I was to make cuttings, if there was anything which he ought to look into He asked me to write a letter to Mr Rajagopalachari of Madras, and also gave me some correspondence to do In addition, I have now and then to attend to the small details of work in the kitchen For Devadas would not give me much of kitchen work to do, and would himself attend to the more laborious

items. But I find that, little by little, the opportunity has been coming to me to clean and wash Mahatmaji's plates, to peel the fruits for him, and take to him his food, and do similar other services I am feeling that it is part of my good fortune to be able to serve him in these various ways. The Maulana Saheb has drafted another message in Urdu, and made it over to me for translation into English The Maulana, a learned scholar of ripe experience, is ever engaged in discriminating between the "fitness" and the "unfitness" of every single thing His minute examination of even the most insignificant matters has often reminded me of the keenness with which our ancient Hindu logicians debated as to whether the thud accompanying the fall of the fruit from the palm tree is precedent or antecedent to the fall

19th October — While in Bombay, I met Mr Shyam Sundara Chakravarti, Editor of the *Servant* of Calcutta I have no present recollection of what passed between him and me But I remember that he put me one special question He said to me —"What do you think was characteristic of Mahatmaji's life"? In answer I gave him a number of incidents of Mahatmaji's life to show in a general way the vast difference between his ways and the ways of ordinary men "Nevertheless", said I " there is one thing in special, which is truly characteristic of Mahatmaji It is this He does not look upon anybody as in any special sense his own, so much so that even his own wife and sons are not allowed to think or feel that they have any special claim on him It appears as if everybody has an equal claim on him, and he looks upon all with an equal eye. That such is the mark of highly elevated souls I have

known, having read of it in books But in the case of Mahatmaji, I have been able to study it at first hand, through numberless little facts and incidents of his life "

Last evening, after a whole day's work I was feeling tired, and had betaken myself to my room for rest But I was sent for, for there were still arrears of correspondence to clear off To some of the letters he had himself written out replies But having spent the best part of the day in writing for *Young India*, he also was feeling fatigued and so my help was necessary He handed to me some of the letters to answer, with instructions as to how they were to be answered He would sign the letters, but I must write out the answers myself I had to remain with him till 10 P M, doing as he asked me He put several "reports" into my hand and asked me to give him their substance orally, then and there About the letters I thought that if I could give him satisfaction by writing out the replies properly, that would considerably lighten his labours That thought cheered me , but I felt also a creeping fear that I was likely to fail ,for the work was responsible, and my powers were so limited He has a style of his own which consists in expressing the maximum of thought within the compass of a minimum of words It would be no easy matter for me to be able to imitate this style Besides, there was the question of writing English correctly I was thus feeling uneasy However, I have done some of the letters and submitted them to him He has signed them without making any material alterations This has to some extent dispelled my fears Then he has given me some further work to do He has asked me to look through the old files of *Young India* and the *Times Year Book*, and

find out some references for him This I have also done I had enough experience of this sort of work in connection with the *Dawn Magazine* having had to find out references for my teacher, Mr Mukerji (the Editor) This kind of work has no terrors for me But I do feel nervous when writing letters which would go over Mahatmaji's signature I would not mind writing letters for Mahatmaji over my own name

I hear that we shall be leaving for Delhi on the 30th instant The All-India Congress Committee will commence its business at Delhi on the 4th November From Delhi we shall be going to Lahore for a day or two Mahatmaji has made up his mind not to go out on any further tour He has set his heart on concentrating on Gujarat, and making it the centre of his activities It would appear that he is about to launch a new and big campaign with Gujarat as the base He is watching how things are progressing in each separate district of Gujarat and contributing articles every week to the *Navajivan* (his Gujarati weekly) discussing matters from fresh points of view, and preparing the mind of the Gujaratis for the coming struggle But Lala Lajpat Rai has addressed a most appealing telegram of invitation, and although Mahatmaji is most unwilling to go anywhere outside Gujarat, he has had to consent to be at Lahore for a day or two, after finishing his work at Delhi Mahatmaji has made an exception here, for invitations (by wire) have been pouring in everyday, and he has consistently declined them all

20th October —6-30 A M I am not going to spin now as I have something very important to write which I must do immediately This morning after the prayers, Mahatmaji addressed us at some length I could not

understand his Gujarati, but I could hear him making frequent mention of my name and that of another Ashram member I therefore made every effort to follow his speech, but I could not make out anything Afterwards I got an Ashram friend of mine to report for me Mahatmaji's address, and I am giving below the gist Mahatmaji had spoken for about 40 minutes, and my friend could not give a very lucid account, nevertheless the substantial facts may be gathered from what follows

Mahatmaji began thus —"As soon as I woke up this morning at four, my mind involuntarily turned towards two persons,—one being X and the other Krishnadas He enquired if X was present at the prayer meeting and learning that he was not, he paused for a while, and then went on to say,—I have noticed that something has been worrying X always, but I have found also that whatever the work entrusted to him, he does it most ungrudgingly He keeps his grief to himself, but expects at the same time that I should be able to probe it myself But I am always so busy with work that to keep an eye on every one of you finding out your particular needs and grievances would be almost an impossibility for me, unless of course you came and frankly told me all about them I am therefore in a fix not knowing how to help X out of his trouble If any of you can tell me what it is, I shall feel relieved and know how to deal with it" Mahatmaji next said,—"When lately all sorts of rumours of my arrest were in the air, I expressed the wish that the publication of *Young India* should be suspended But since then, (and even so recently as the day before yesterday) many friends have approached me and given me their assurance that there was no need to

worry over *Navajivan* and *Young India*, and that they should be able to conduct both in a manner worthy of their past, during my absence in gaol I am not particular about *Navajivan*, but my belief is that it would not be easy to preserve the style and individuality of *Young India* But the thing may be possible if I can give the necessary training to people from now For this I have chosen Pyarilal and Krishnadas Everyone of us here in the Ashram should think it his duty to become responsible for, and specialise in, some particular work For I am not sure how it will fare with me when January comes If Swaraj is won, even then our work will not be over, on the contrary its scope will widen enormously For then we shall have to work ceaselessly to prevent the country from lapsing into its old state of torpor or apathy On the other hand, if Swaraj is not won, it will be incumbent on you to undertake the responsibility of conducting the Ashram, and then each one of you will have to take charge of some one or other branch of Ashram work If there is no Swaraj, I cannot tell you now what is in store for me May be, I shall be lodged in prison, or it might also be that my bodily system would receive a shock from which it might not recover Therefore it is for you now, before I have left you, to think and decide on your course of action, and to that end each one of you can put me such questions as you feel necessary "

After giving these necessary instructions, Mahatmaji dwelt at great length on the need for observing the vows and rules of the Ashram, sorrowfully pointing out that there were many who kept away from the prayer meetings

Mahatmaji's remarks have produced a great stir

throughout the Asram, and I found the inmates assembling in groups, conversing and discussing Mahatmaji's question It was understood that he was preparing to bid farewell to them, and the faces of all were sad and heavy with the weight of deep anxiety

Almost the whole of the day Mahatmaji was working without intermission At 3 o' clock he was feeling exhausted, and so laid himself down to rest for a short while. I was asked to keep away the flies He speaks so fast when giving orders that one could with difficulty follow him I sat fanning away the flies There has been a regular invasion of flies at the Ashram this season They are proving extremely troublesome but Mahatmaji would bear the annoyance in silence That is why we have now and then to go and fan away the flies without our being asked by him He went to bed at 8 P M I also was feeling tired But he asked me to rub oil At night when he takes to his bed for sleep, oil is rubbed on his forehead and feet That has been the usual practice Twice he pointed to his chest without saying anything, but I could not catch his meaning, and went on as before He kept silent Then when "Ba" came there, he uttered the one word "chest" She explained to me that no more oil was to be applied to the forehead Then, bidding me go to bed, she herself began to rub the oil on his chest I continued to sit near Mahatmaji for a little while longer, and then left and went to sleep at 9 P M

CHAPTER XIV

PREPARING TO BID FAREWELL—II

21st October —Going to bed at 9 last evening, I got up at three this morning I find that nowadays I do not stand in need of more than six hours of sleep Rising, I saw all Nature wearing a smiling appearance in the clear, silver moonlight The inmates were then all fast asleep Far away on the other bank of the river is the cremation-ground of Ahmedabad In that solemn stillness of the night some one was chanting aloud some Sanskrit hymn while performing his ablutions at the burning-ghat I rose and with slow, gentle steps walked to the prayer-ground There I gave myself up to musing and my thoughts revolved in no coherent manner round the question of my country, of the movement, and of Mahatmaji himself Since the day Mr Mukerji heard that in Mahatmaji's opinion his body might not survive the shock of the failure of his movement, he has been impressing upon me the duty of devoting myself heart and soul to ministering to the needs and comforts of Mahatmaji's body He strongly believes that there is a hidden power in personal service, if it is truly sincere and disinterested, which can so work on the inner spirit of man as to make it impossible for it to yield to the temptation of desiring a separation from the physical body But such power and privilege of true disinterested service, thought I, must be a special gift vouchsafed by Providence and I could not discover how I was specially qualified for that exalted type of work While

I sat revolving these thoughts in my mind, I saw Mahatmaji leaving his bed The open verandah where he sleeps could be seen from the prayer-ground I could see from my distance that, as soon as he got up, he took up a broom and began sweeping the floor of his sitting room I ran up to him, and took from him the broom and began to sweep myself In the meantime, he himself spread out his carpet and arranged the desk and writing materials As soon as everything was ready he was busy writing something Now-a-days, the morning prayer meeting sits at 5 30 instead of at 5 So when it was time he left his writing work and joined in the prayer I went up to him again at 6-30, when it was quite light He said to me,--" From to-morrow forward, let my sitting room be swept clean, and the carpet laid, at 4 o'clock ' I promised that it would be done He next inquired if I could follow all that he spoke yesterday at the prayer-meeting I said, "I could not understand your Gujarati speech , but I got it from an inmate who under stood you that you wished to train me for work in connection with *Young India* ' To this Mahatmaji replied, "Not you alone, but Pyarilal also I have asked some others too, to write something Henceforth you will also write something everyday, and submit the same to me I want to see how the work would go on in my absence *Young India* has become very influential now-a-days, and you can do a great deal of good by its means That is why I am anxious to get for myself from beforehand some rough idea as to how far the work of *Young India* could go on in my absence "

I wanted to make clear to Mahatmaji my own position in the matter So I began thus,--"I hardly think that it would be possible for any one else to conduct *Young India*

in the way you are doing The words that came out of the depths of your heart are endowed with a special energy Even if others said the very same things, these would not carry the same conviction For, in my opinion, your words carry with them some latent power which gives them their authority "

Then I proceeded to add —"Whatever I am ordered to do, I will try my very best to carry out But I cannot forget that the power of assimilation is something wholly different from the power of origination During my long years of association with Mr Mukerji, I had opportunities of getting familiar with higher thoughts and ideas, and I have acquired also something of the power of following and understanding an intellectual discussion But if a new problem arises, and I be called upon to think independently on it and solve it for myself, I fear I have not the power of doing so, nor have I such confidence in me that I shall be able to acquire it soon Further, I have noticed one characteristic of your writing In your answer to the Poet, Rabindranath Tagore's article "The Call of Truth", while not hesitating to expose what you conceived to be the Poet's errors, you have not failed to do full justice to what you recognised to be true in that article For us to preserve this mental balance is very difficult We are so much at the mercy of our likes and our dislikes that, roughly speaking, these and not the call of Truth may be said to determine our course of action In many instances we find that the power of separating the true from the untrue in any particular matter, and then of holding to the true while disowning the untrue, that power is denied to us "

Mahatmaji was pleased with what I said; but he

wanted to explain that there was no cause for fear —"What you say is perfectly true," said he, "but persevere If you persevere you will find that the power of discrimination and judgment will slowly unfold itself For the time-old basic truths of the universe are not more than a few in number All other truths are but applications of those primary truths to altered circumstances, times and places The basic truths would remain the same now as hereafter, but the applied truths would vary from time to time with the change of time, place and environment Therefore, the more firmly you are rooted in your convictions as regards the basic truths, the more readily will the power of "originality" or "invention" come to you From an early age I have had my training in separating truths from untruths, and looking at them as two distinct entities The power of discriminating truth from untruth has therefore become quite natural for me I am thus in a position to do justice to even an iota of truth although it might lie obscured among a heap of untruth Of one and the same principle, the positive aspect is known as Truth, and the negative as *Ahimsa* or non-violence Everything is included in Truth On principle, therefore, there is no need for preaching *Ahimsa* separately Nevertheless such propaganda has become necessary in view of the special requirements of the times If one is firmly planted in Truth, *Ahimsa* or non-violence follows as a matter of course" After giving me this advice, Mahatmaji exhorted me again to write something for *Young India* everyday He told me that whatever was worth accepting in my writing, he would accept, the rest he would reject This injunction of Mahatmaji's I must carry out whatever the cost. Hav-

ing seen the whole country with my own eyes in Mahatmaji's company, I am now experiencing a certain change of feeling within I am beginning to envisage India from a new angle of vision as an altogether new entity Hitherto I was not accustomed to think on any problem affecting the country with a sense of personal responsibility, but my experiences gathered during the last tour will stand me in good stead, and I must henceforth begin to think on Indian problems so as to equip myself for Mahatmaji's task

22nd October —Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya arrived here this morning, and was closeted with Mahatmaji for two hours When Pandit Malaviya arrived, Mahatmaji was not in his room, and not knowing where he had gone, I went about in all hurry to make enquiries Those who live in the Ashram with their families are lodged at some distance in houses standing in a double row which look like barracks When I arrived there, I found Mahatmaji going about from door to door, and enquiring about the needs and convenience of the inmates My impression at the time was that he was then taking his final leave of them all, in that way While he was so engaged, I went and informed him of Pandit Malaviya's arrival He soon came back to his room Panditji now saw Mahatmaji for the first time wearing his loin-cloth and with a bare body Mahatmaji was looking like an ascetic and Panditji was visibly moved. Advancing towards him and warmly grasping his hand, Panditji feelingly said, —"Why, brother, should you thus dress yourself? Is it right"? Then they sat together, and the conversation being private, I came away from Mahatmaji's room. Once I looked from a distance, and saw that Malaviyaji was explaining, and that Mahatmaji was quietly

listening It is now 12-30, and still the conference was not ended With Malaviyaji has come his son Govind Govind has given Devadas to understand that Malaviyaji had an interview with the Viceroy, Lord Reading, and that he has come to see Mahatmaji in that connection Govind said,—"I am absolutely certain father will be able to convince Mahatmaji" I do not know what all this is about, but I understand that Lord Reading has said nothing about Mahatmaji's arrest and I infer that Mahatmaji is not going to be arrested now

23rd October—This morning Mahatmaji inquired if yesterday I had written any article I had to say, "No" I am feeling uneasy at not having been able to carry out his wishes And yet, this morning also, when after prayers he was referring to *Young India*, he mentioned my name in that connection I alone know how feeble are my powers In the first place my command over the English language is limited, and the subject matter itself is too complex for my understanding Not knowing how to acquire the power of thinking out difficult problems, I am feeling miserable and worried

24th October—Malaviyaji has joined us in the daily routine of the Ashram He is not in the best of health, and yet last morning when the prayer bell rang out at 4, he came and attended the prayer-meeting Mahatmaji gave the seat of Acharya* to Pandit Malaviya, and sitting by Panditji's side he joined in the prayers The prayers over, Mahatmaji requested Malaviyaji to give some religious instruction to the members Panditji, as befitted a true Brahman with whom offering of religious instruction is a

* The officiating priest

birth-right, gave a long discourse Then in the course of the day he left the Ashram for the city

This morning I attempted an article with the caption, "Under Swaraj," and wrote out a considerable part of it. To-day being Monday, Mahatmaji's day of silence, I have to be constantly by his side, but as I had to write the article I could not spend much time with him At three in the afternoon he sent for me through Devadas He had given me a second Urdu message concerning the Moplah rebellion from the pen of Maulana Azad Sobani to translate into English Knowing, as I did, that he had not been particularly impressed by the Maulana's first message on the same subject, I had not yet taken up the second When I said that, he wrote down for me the words,—"Just condense the whole into a single paragraph" This I did I wanted also to explain why I had to keep away from him the whole of the day I therefore submitted for his inspection as much of my article "Under Swaraj", as I had written, as also a Note on the arrest of Mr J M Sen Gupta of Chittagong. He looked through them and wrote the following remarks — "Under Swaraj" is shaping itself all right, you should finish it The Chittagong note is not bright enough, and is somewhat censorious" I explained that it was my intention to complete "Under Swaraj" with one more paragraph He wrote in reply,—"As it is, it does not read complete, or as if it is ending with two or three sentences—but try" I said that I was under the impression that the article was growing too long, and I had therefore thought fit to cut it short. But now I would write rather elaborately Mahatmaji nodded assent

25th October —I have succeeded in completing

"Under Swaraj", and have submitted it to him What fresh subject should I write about every day? That is the thought that is uppermost in my mind I have never tried my hand at writing short paragraphs Yet perhaps it is such writing that finds most favour with Mahatmaji There is one particular defect from which I must free myself In going to write I unconsciously drift into over-elaborateness, and my writing becomes heavy What Mahatmaji wants is a clear, crisp and cut-and-dried style

Pandit Malaviyaji had left day before yesterday, but Mahatmaji has sent him a wire asking his presence again at Ahmedabad The relations between the mill-owners and the mill-hands of Ahmedabad have been getting strained Mahatmaji on behalf of the labourers has been trying his best to come to an understanding with the mill-owners But nothing has come of the negotiations, and so as a last resource, he is contemplating a *Satyagraha* fight by the workmen This apparently has brought down the owners, and they have agreed to submit the dispute to the arbitration of Pandit Malaviya It appears probable that Panditji will have to spend some days at Ahmedabad in connection with this matter

There is much to learn by observing how the negotiations are being conducted Mahatmaji's method of fight is quite novel What becomes of a fight if there is no hurling of abusive epithets or no attempt at brow-beating? If a similar situation had arisen in Bengal, the sensation it would have created would have been immense But what do we find here? Here we see the millionaire President of the Mill-owners' Association coming down from the City almost every day to the Ashram to meet Mahatmaji.

sitting with him on the same carpet and discussing the points in dispute in a spirit of the utmost friendliness Here are the representatives of two opposing parties, and the dispute itself is serious enough in all conscience; but if a stranger came and saw them, the impression he would carry away would be that of two friends engaged in a friendly chat To be able to bring so much of gentleness and gentlemanliness to bear on the conduct of a fight on which both sides are so very keen is a unique phenomenon attributable to the power of Mahatmaji's character and personality So also on other occasions, I have found that under his magnetic influence, persons coming to meet him left aside their hauteur and became the most sedate, calm and well-behaved of peoples

Entering Mahatmaji's room at midday, I found him smiling all by himself in gleeful mood. As soon as I entered he said, "Krishnadas, so many telegrams come to me daily, and yet not knowing what to do with the forms, I used to tear them It gave me pain, and I was thinking on what use they could be put to At last I have hit upon a plan" He then took up a form and showed me how to make a cover out of it He then directed me to prepare envelopes from the telegraph forms received by us every day I have begun to make these covers, and he has been using them for the purpose of his letters He has given them the name of "Patent Envelopes" He finds so much genuine pleasure in using such covers that he would not touch envelopes of far superior quality even when they would be placed before him This small matter, however, shows what keen judgment he brings to bear upon even small things It also shows in a most striking manner how at a

time when a fierce India-wide national fight was raging, Mahatmaji could keep himself cool and collected and what was more remarkable still, keep up a lightsome mood

I will give here another illustration of Mahatmaji's sense of humour and buoyancy of spirits Some of the teachers of the National College in Bombay, having come on a visit to Ahmedabad during the Dewali holidays, saw Mahatmaji, and asked him for advice as to how they should best spend the vacation He was observing silence on that day and wrote down the following answer

Card, Spin, Weave,
Spin, Weave, Card,
Weave, Card, Spin

On reading the reply the teachers burst out laughing, while one of them took the piece of paper on which it was written to be kept as a memento

It has been arranged that, leaving Sabarmati on 1st November by the 2 P M train, we should reach Delhi on the evening of the 2nd. Then, perhaps, after a tour of only a few days in the Punjab, we shall be returning to the Ashram Mahatmaji is most reluctant nowadays to leave Gujarat and go elsewhere for other work Here in Gujarat the spread of Khaddar has been the most striking Gujarat also seems to have acquired a firmer hold on methods of non-violent work than any of the other provinces It seems to me that Mahatmaji would send his ultimatum to Government about the middle of November and stake his all on it As day succeeds day, I am struck by the fact that he now and then lapses into moods of absent-mindedness From the day of his arrival at the Ashram,

people were coming, group after group, to have a sight of him, and the rush of visitors was particularly great on sacred days like the *Ekadasi* * or on days of religious festivity And every day there were offerings made to Mahatmaji, ranging from small amounts like two annas, four annas or eight annas to one, five or even ten rupees at times, —the total number of such daily offerings mounting to a high figure But this interfering with his work, the visitors have latterly not been allowed to see him in his room They are now being turned back from the very entrance passage of the Ashram

26th October —Since night before last, there has been a sudden spell of cold weather, and I caught a slight cold Devadas coming to know of it, gave me tea and quinine and I have got rid of the cold Of late, attacks of fever have been very frequent here The fever looks very much like malaria There is a resident doctor in the Ashram with whom Mahatmaji is found frequently engaged in discussing the causes of the outbreak How could malaria have found entrance into a place so scrupulously clean and well-kept as this? The tea and the quinine have heated my brain, and I did not have good sleep last night Nevertheless, there has been no break in my routine of work I got up at three as usual, and before it was four had finished my other duties like sweeping the floor of Mahatmaji's room, arranging the carpet for Mahatmaji, etc. At Delhi we shall be the guest of Dr Ansari I hear that there is a proposal to go to Muttra and Panipat after finishing Delhi, but so far there has been nothing settled with regard to our

* The eleventh day of a lunar fortnight when fasting is enjoined on Hindus

movements in the Punjab The tour programme will be arranged after reaching Delhi.

I did a fairly good day's writing yesterday, but would Mahatmaji approve and accept the same? An Indian sojourner in England had written a long letter to Mahatmaji. Mahatmaji asked me to write out an answer and show it to him He has passed the draft reply Only he has scored out the word, "Mahatmaji", wherever I had to write it, and put in "Mr Gandhi" instead In another place, I wrote, "India can remain within the Empire, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect" He has altered it into "India can remain with the British, if it is consistent with her dignity and self-respect" The writer's point is that Mahatmaji would do well to place the question of Indian Swaraj in the forefront of his movement, while the redress of the Punjab and Khilafat wrongs should find a secondary place

31st October —Yesterday I had the hairs of my head cropped The Gujarati barber has so used his skill that, I am told, I could no longer be recognised for a Bengali. To-day is the New Year's Day for Gujarat Among Gujaratis the year comes to an end on the Dewali day Amongst Bengalis, on the Bijaya Day, and after the immersion in the river of the goddess Durga after a three days' worship, there is the custom of meeting friends and relatives, and making obeisance to elders A similar custom is observed here in Gujarat on the Gujarati New Year's Day, when the Gujaratis meet friends and salute elders Yesterday I had planned that this morning I should be the first to approach Mahatmaji, and make my New Year's salutation to him. I rose as usual at the appointed hour, and as on other days, I did my

morning duties of sweeping the floor, and arranging the carpet for Mahatmaji, so that when he rose at 4, I was there before him Yet I felt too shy to offer him my salutation. Then after the prayers when he came back to his room, group after group of Ashram people came and rendered their obeisances to him After they had left, and there was nobody else in the room, I made bold to approach him and made my obeisance by touching my forehead to the floor, which however was rather clumsily done He looked up to see me, but without a word I slipped away from his presence

Among the newspaper cuttings that Mr Mukerji has sent me is one describing the panic in the Manchester piece-goods market caused by the effects of the Non-Co-operation movement Last night I read out the cutting to Mahatmaji, and when I had finished, he said with a smile on his lips, "Yes, friend, there need be no fear. Everything will shape itself all right in the end" Another cutting sent by Mr Mukerji is from the *Servant* newspaper of Calcutta. I have given it him to read, and I am sure he will read it with pleasure It contains an expression of the great chemist Dr. Roy's views on the spinning wheel Dr Roy's views have undergone a complete change, he being now in favour of the wheel A long letter from him to Mahatmaji has reached here On the top of it I find written in big characters the word, *Confidential*

This morning about nine, two English gentlemen accompanied by two English ladies came to visit Mahatmaji, but as it is Monday today, his day of silence, he could not talk to them It fell to me to show them round the Ashram. The ladies were very much interested in the spinning-wheels

at work. I took advantage of the occasion to suggest to them that they might as well set about spinning on their own account This set them laughing.

The charge of Mahatmaji's English correspondence has been slowly passing into my hands, and as a result my duties have been getting heavier My routine of work nowadays may be roughly given as follows --I rise at 3, and perform my own devotions and other duties. At 3-45 A. M I go to sweep Mahatmaji's room, and arrange the carpet for him to sit on, after which I repair to the prayer-grounds to lay Khaddar sheets on, to seat the congregation and arrange a special seat there for Mahatmaji From 4·45 to 6 A M is the Ashram prayer, after which I have to get ready Mahatmaji's breakfast which consists of goat's milk and peeled fruits He takes it every morning at 6 30 A M After breakfast he is usually free and alone, and I take the opportunity to have instructions from him as regards correspondence and other necessary matters In case he has visitors after breakfast, I go and take my own breakfast Then up till 8 30 A M, I attend to Mahatmaji's office correspondence From 8 30 to 9 30 A M I do odd jobs for the kitchen, after which I have to attend to the numerous telegrams which are delivered about this time I sit near him, and write out the replies as dictated by him Between 11 and 11 30 A M, I take my principal meal, while Mahatmaji does his daily spinning for half-an-hour. At 11 30 A M, I go and get hot water, etc for his bath At 12 noon, he takes his midday meal As at breakfast, so also now, he drinks about a pint and a half of goat's milk (warmed) and takes some fruits. But now in addition to the above, he takes some five or six pieces of

Bhakri (a style of Gujarati bread) fried in *ghee* (melted butter) prepared from goat's milk After the midday meal Mahatmaji reads newspapers for half-an-hour, and at 1-30 he takes a nap In the meantime the post has arrived and I am engaged in sorting the letters As soon as he is up, he puts me the question—"How long have I slept'?—He goes to sleep for some 30 to 40 minutes, and when I tell him how long, he would exclaim—"So long?" From 3 to 3 30 P M. I remain busy with the newspapers, hurriedly looking over the news. I have to tell him every day the news of the Moplah outbreak of Malabar as given in the daily "Hindu" of Madras. Then I have to give him orally the substance of the longer letters as well as of the "Reports" (from the Congress Provincial Centres) which have come by the day's post. Then I take away with me the letters whose replies he asks me to write. This goes on till 5 or 5-30 P M But during the whole afternoon while Mahatmaji would be thus busily engaged, crowds of common people anxious to have a Darshan (i e, auspicious sight) of Mahatmaji and make their salutation, would be coming in groups, filling Mahatmaji's room. He takes his evening meal at six, a little before sundown At seven the prayer-meeting begins. After prayers many people come to see Mahatmaji, but he takes care to dispose of them quickly enough, and about eight he motors to the city After he has left I begin arranging his papers As I have to get up at three in the morning, I go to bed before nine, "Ba (Mrs Gandhi) and Devadas keeping awake to attend to Mahatmaji when he returns

CHAPTER XV

ALL-INDIA CONGRESS WORKING COMMITTEE AT DELHI

The All-India Congress Committee is going to hold its next session on the 4th November Mahatmaji, therefore, started for Delhi on the 1st November Miss Anasuya Ben accompanied him The venerable Mr Abbas Tyebji of Baroda had wired Devadas to reserve a berth for him, in the same train The telegram could be interpreted in either of two ways According to Mahatmaji, Mr Tyebji wanted the berth to be reserved in the same compartment as his, but Devadas thought differently In Devadas's opinion Mr Tyebji wanted the berth elsewhere, failing which he might travel in the same compartment with Mahatmaji. Arriving at the Sabarmati station, and finding that his berth was in Mahatmaji's compartment, he felt rather nervous and exclaimed, "Horror of horrors! Bapuji, what gentleman could possibly travel with you in the same compartment? To be invaded by crowds at every station, and to be continually on the alert to avoid a collision with them would be enough to kill out a man" However, Mr Tyebji now for once could not obtain an absolution for himself from this arduous and irksome piece of duty

Besides Devadas and myself, Mr Pyeralal also was one of the party After our Delhi tour he would take a short leave and proceed to his home in the Punjab Devadas and Pyeralal had already left for the station Mahatmaji was busy doing some writing work, and would not leave till

the very last moment I was waiting to arrange the papers, and take with me the portfolio for his use during the tours I had therefore to be seated by his side on our way to the Sabarmati station in the Ashram tonga.* When we were half-way, he asked me the following question rather abruptly,—"Don't you write to Satish Babu † regularly?"

I replied, 'yes, I do"

Mahatmaji —"When I met him last in Calcutta, we had a talk about the Charka, and I requested him to give me his personal experiences with the wheel I expressed to Satish Babu my view that what the Poet (Rabindranath Tagore) says in regard to this matter is not well grounded I cannot make out why spinning should be held as standing in the way of a man's mental or spiritual growth. Is it not the teaching of the Gita that the wise man who keeps control over his mind does not get entangled in his outward activities? For he acts without feeling identified with his actions Therefore, if we could not cultivate the habit of doing our acts outwardly with the help of our sense-organs, while inwardly at the same time we kept control over ourselves, then the inevitable result would be that the mind would go on spinning out a crowd of outgoing thoughts and desires, and would ultimately succumb to their lure That way lies misery Therefore, I am of opinion that if we could practise spinning with our hands, while we kept our mind controlled within, our mental and spiritual development would be none the worse for such practice I am eager to know what Satish Babu's experience is in this matter"

* A two-wheeled conveyance drawn by a single horse

† Mr Mukerji, my teacher

I —"He has not yet written to me anything on the subject, but I know that his sympathies are with you, and though he has not openly joined your movement for reasons of his own, nevertheless he has done what he can to further your work In case of your arrest you wish me to take over partially the work of *Young India* But I know I have not the requisite ability So as a last resource I have written to Mr Mukerji to come and do what he can to help me in the matter

Mahatmaji —"Have you done so? You have done very well, indeed!" speaking with special emphasis on the words, *very well*

I —" But I am not sure whether he will agree to the proposal Before, he used to do a good deal of public work, but latterly he has kept in the background, not feeling inclined to pose as a public worker But if God wills otherwise, then it would be a different thing "

Then the conversation turned on the good old days of Swadeshi agitation in Bengal He listened to me intently and I spoke out freely and fully

We arrived at the station Then Mahatmaji entered his compartment, and took the seat reserved for him, Devadas keeping him company, while Pyeralal and myself, with Mr. Majli of the Karnatak Provincial Congress Committee, got into another compartment and accommodated ourselves there How shall I describe the vast crowds that came to have a mere sight of Mahatmaji at various places on the way? The reader will be able to call up a picture from such descriptions as I have already given in previous chapters Mahatmaji has travelled by this route many a time before, and yet the eagerness of the public to

have a sight of him does not abate Devadas calls this line "the worst line", that is, the "worst" for his father, judging by the size of the crowds that assemble to greet him While passing through the great Indian States of Rajputana renowned in Indian history,—Marwar Ajmere, Kishengarh, Jaypur, Alwar etc, and witnessing the roll of surging humanity, like the roll of ocean-waves, enchanting visions of India's past greatness and glory rose before my mind's eye But as they rose, so they disappeared, as quickly as in a dream There is the familiar Urdu saying,—"Delhi is still far off", and yet, as it seemed to me, quickly enough we covered a distance of some thirty hours of railway journey, reaching Delhi on the evening of 2nd November (8 P M) The terrific roar sent up by the multitudinous throng at the station, as the train steamed in, seemed to me to send a tremor through the earth beneath our feet, while the crowd itself was swayed hither and thither like dry leaves caught in a whirlwind The scene reminded one of the day of universal destruction But the hands of skilled organisers were working unseen to prevent a chaos and so instead of going under, Mahatmaji and his party were enabled safely to reach their destination

At Delhi, Mahatmaji was the guest of Dr Ansari The Doctor lived in his house, No 1 Dariagunj, in the eastern outskirts of the city On the eastern side, the city ends here Beyond and adjoining the Doctor's residence, I saw the City wall still standing, although in a dilapidated condition Beyond the wall, as far as eye could reach, stretches a vast sandy plain through which the dark waters of the Kalindi are seen winding their way until they lose themselves in the dim distance The name

Daryagunj* has probably been given to this part of the City as it appears to issue out of the river Jumna

The next morning I saw the sun slowly rising from the bosom of the vast eastern plain A little to the north-west of Dr. Ansari's house, the Juma Masjid, the Fort and the Imperial Palace, all bearing on their bosom historic marks of the power and greatness of the Mogul Emperors, still stand, unaffected by the ravages of time, as though they were so many mansions newly erected But those days of Mogul ascendancy and Mogul splendour, all, all have gone They had their day, and are no more As we were nearing the City, I could see from the train, at various points, the remains of many a locality once humming with life, saw also the ruins of many a fort and palace Then saw I, the next morning, to the east of the City, that vast level plain stretching like a sandy waste up to the very verge of the distant horizon And I said to myself—Truly, indeed, is Delhi India's greatest grave-yard!

What mighty significance attaches to this region! Again and again has centralised power, eager to plant its flag at Delhi, sought to seize her to proclaim its sovereignty over the whole of India But, again and again, do we find the same power slowly crumbling down, till at last it lay buried beneath Delhi's soil. Earthly power may best be employed in the service of mankind, but instead, if it is employed to bring others under its yoke, or to serve narrow selfish objects, or to minister to mere material enjoyment, it is bound to meet with a speedy dissolution. As if to illustrate this eternal truth of life in a living, visible manner, does ancient Delhi, although its soul has

* *Darya* in vernacular is river, *Gunj* is city

departed, still continue to wear its ancient, physical garments

No people whose life on earth was not the visible expression of some great principle or ideal could ever hope to preserve intact its historical entity, its historical personality The principle of Individuality or the desire for individual Freedom was the animating principle of Greek life and culture Similarly, the principle of Order *i e*, the urge towards the establishment of order formed the corner-stone of Roman civilisation When these ideals of national life began to burn less and less brightly in Greek and Roman hearts, the disintegration of their national lives set in, and their historical personality soon suffered an eclipse Mahatmaji, therefore, has hoisted a new flag, the flag of a great ideal, round which the whole country might rally In the history of the world it is nothing new to find a subject people attempting to throw off the yoke of their subjection Such attempts have been and will be But what is wholly new in history is the discovery made by Mahatma Gandhi that the wresting of Indian Freedom need not be by methods of violence He has discovered that there is a way of winning Freedom by means of warfare wholly non-violent, and this is altogether a new thing in world's history Further results follow from this important discovery. Ordinarily whenever there is any sort of warfare going, there is the tendency for the lower side of man's nature to assert itself and gain the upperhand But in a non-violent struggle the most important condition of success being the preservation of peace while the struggle is on, it becomes imperative so to train the fighters that their higher instincts are stimulated, while the lower ones are kept under control.

Therefore it is that non-violent warfare is necessarily conducive to the development of the nobler side of man's nature Secondly, if the political life of India could be organised and built upon the basis of this high ideal, it would be possible then for the peoples of India to realise and maintain a united, national existence on what may be called a natural basis of life For if we did not proceed from now to build up the forces of cohesion on the lines of non-violence, as suggested by Mahatmaji, but only went on strengthening the "General Will" against the political authorities here in India, we might indeed succeed in breaking up the Government, but with that result? The result would be that with the disappearance of the present Government, the artificial or enforced unity that it has built up would vanish in no time, as has happened before Mahatmaji's programme of non-violent warfare as a means of winning political freedom is, therefore, an altogether new discovery of the highest import

Mahatmaji has just returned from an all-India tour which has resulted in a universal awakening of political consciousness The soil having thus been prepared, he has now come to Delhi to sow the seed. Before the year is out, the Government shall have to be made subservient to the Will of the people, and the triple demand of the Punjab, the Khilafat and Swaraj shall have be enforced. With this firm resolve in his mind, Mahatmaji has arranged a plan of work for the country which is now going to publish. He has prepared while travelling in his train, a draft Resolution recommending mass civil disobedience, which he intends to move before the ensuing All-India Congress Committee Now he is indeed going to play with

fire I have already referred to the fact that while at the Ashram I had often found him deep in thought and charged with anxiety The events of 1919 following on the passing of the Rowlatt Act, and the immediate launching by him of Civil Disobedience,—the scenes of anarchy and bloodshed then enacted in the Punjab and at Delhi, Ahmedabad Viramgaum, &c, were all fresh in his memory. He was, therefore, now taking stock of all surrounding circumstances and proceeding with all due care and circumspection He drafted his Resolution accordingly. As soon as we reached our quarters at Delhi on the evening of the 2nd instant, he gave us the draft and asked us to make fair copies of the same Mr Pyerilal, Mr Majli and I were soon engaged on this work, while Mahatmaji sat up far into the night closeted with Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr Ansari and other great leaders of the City

The next day (3rd November) from 8 A M to 1 P M, the Working Committee sat and discussed the draft Resolution At 3 P M, Mahatmaji paid a brief visit to a meeting of the Central Khilafat Committee Then the Working Committee met again in Mahatmaji's room from 5 to 9 P M Almost all the principal leaders of India were present at this meeting, and Mahatmaji's draft was subjected to a minute and critical examination and amended in parts in accordance with the decision of the majority The amended Resolution was to be placed on the following day (4th November) before the A I C C In the Working Committee both Mr Kelkar of Poona and Mr Vithalbhai Patel of Bombay, while accepting *in toto* Mahatmaji's plan of starting Civil Disobedience, held that no special preliminary training was necessary for our people to qualify

for such action Mahatmaji, however, was convinced of the need of laying down conditions of strict discipline which must in the first instance be fulfilled before either individuals or districts or provinces could be allowed to launch out on a campaign of civil disobedience In this matter, therefore, he had to meet with vehement opposition from Messrs Kelkar and Patel One particular clause of the Resolution was to the effect that if anyone desired to start civil disobedience individually, he should not be permitted to do so unless, in the first place he had totally discarded the use of foreign cloth and taken to Khaddar (handspun and handwoven) as his habitual personal wear Seth Jamnalal, a devoted follower of Mahatmaji, wanted to make the condition stricter still, and proposed that a further clause be inserted making it obligatory upon every member of the family of the individual civil resister to renounce the use of foreign cloth This was too much for Mr Kelkar In the body of the draft Resolution Mahatmaji had also inserted a clause declaring that if mass civil disobedience was to be started with a District or a Tehsil as a unit, then at least nine-tenths of the population must have accustomed themselves to the use of Khaddar as their daily wear This condition was considered to be too strict, and so at the suggestion of Pandit Motilal Nehru it was replaced by the following —"and therein a vast majority of the population must have adopted full Swadeshi, and must be clothed out of cloth handspun and handwoven in that District or Tehsil"

Another clause of the draft Resolution fell among the assembled leaders like a bombshell Mahatmaji had laid down that where an individual proposed to undertake civil dis-

obedience for himself, he must know hand-spinning When the clause was read out, Pandit Motilal Nehru burst out laughing Mr Lajpat Rai seemed to have undergone a wonderful transformation He would no longer come forward to offer any determined opposition to Mahatmaji's proposals Although feeling a little disappointed at this particular proposal, he only enquired of Mahatmaji how long it would take to learn hand-spinning Hakim Saheb also put the same query to Mahatmaji Both Mr Rajendra Prasad of Behar and Deshabhakta Venkatappayya of the Andhra Province of Madras gave an enthusiastic welcome to the proposal, while Jamnalalji sat silent musing Messrs Kelkar and Patel indulged in loud, angry protests But Mr C R Das took up Mahatmaji's side and began arguing with the opponents He told them that he had himself tried his hand at the wheel and got a few yards of yarn out of it and felt convinced that with some more practice the thing could be easily managed The proposal was then put to the vote, Messrs Kelkar and Patel both voting against it Pandit Motilalji Mr Lajpat Rai, Hakim Saheb, and Dr Ansari remained neutral Mr C R Das voted on Mahatmaji's side, and Mr Rajendra Prasad, Mr Venkatappayya, Seth Jamnalalji and some others voting in its favour, the proposal was finally carried

I was struck to find how Mr C R Das was able to lighten Mahatmaji's labours, arguing and discussing on the side of Mahatmaji To me it appeared that at that time no other supporter of Mahatmaji showed the same amount of determination in defending him as did Mr C R Das When, for instance, Mr Patel was raising various technical objections and making fine distinctions of all sorts in regard to

another matter in opposition to Mahatmaji, I found Mr C R Das rallying to Mahatmaji's support and saying, "Mr Patel, I don't understand the meaning of your opposition" To this Mr Patel immediately retorted, saying, "It is because, Mr Das, I still stand where you did six months ago"

Notwithstanding Mr C R Das's strong support of Mahatmaji, it seemed to me that there was in Mahatmaji's mind a lurking suspicion as to whether the leaders had after all thoroughly realised their responsibility if they should embark on a campaign of mass civil disobedience He felt the need, therefore, of advancing with cautious steps, and this need for caution he tried to impress on the minds of all during the conversations and discussions Thus he addressed the assembled leaders in the following strain —"I am going to start mass civil disobedience in Bardoli, one of the Taluqas in the district of Surat in Gujarat The conduct of the campaign will be under my personal guidance From the leaders of the rest of India I would ask for no further help, than that of friendly sympathy in my effort, and of active watchfulness that there be no breach of peace in their respective provinces Let them patiently, intently watch the conduct of the proceedings at Bardoli Such moral support would be quite enough for my purpose But the preservation of perfect peace throughout the country is a *sine qua non* If peace prevails in the rest of the provinces, I have no fear but that victory is bound to crown our efforts"

Mahatmaji proceeded in the same vein, trying to bring home to his hearers what grave responsibility was involved in a war of Mass Civil Disobedience. Said he,—"Mass Civil

Disobedience is like an earthquake, a sort of a general upheaval on the political plane Where the reign of Mass Civil Disobedience begins, there the subsisting Government ceases to function There every policeman, every soldier, every Government official must either leave the place, or enlist in the service of Swaraj The police stations, the court offices etc , all shall cease to be Government property and shall be taken charge of by the people But for the purpose there should not be the slightest display or exercise of physical force by the people The "Disobedience" should be so complete that if an order was issued on us by the Government saying,—"Go to the right", we must not hesitate to move left-ward But although the opposition to Government must be so determined in character yet the essence of civil disobdience is that it must be undertaken in a spirit of perfect composure If, however, the "disobedience" was wanting in the peaceful spirit, if it was undertaken in a spirit of bravado or of insolence,or in a mood of angry excitement resentment or retaliation, then the disobedience' instead of being "civil" would become"criminal" in essence and in fact Therefore not every body is entitled to engage in a fight of "civil disobedience" Mahatmaji here ended on the same note with which he had begun, –namely by emphasising the absolute need of preserving the peace while he was kept engaged at Bardoli Again said he,– "I would earnestly appeal to you carefully watch how I conduct the campaign at Bardoli, and try to learn the lessons thereof And let nobody seek to engage therein without the necessary preparatory training Let every province prepare itself by training and let it watch the course of events at Bardoli That would

be enough help for me I do not stand in need of any further or any active help When the Swaraj flag floats victoriously at Bardoli, then the people of the Taluqa next to Bardoli, following in the steps of Bardoli, should seek to plant the flag of Swaraj in their midst Thus district after district, in regular succession, throughout the length and breadth of India, should the Swaraj flag be hoisted If, however, while the movement is on, there is the slightest outbreak of violence in any part of the country, then it would not be safe or advisable to prosecute the campaign any further If victory has to be attained by means of civil disobedience, it is absolutely necessary that there should be only one note sounding throughout the length and breadth of the country—the note of concord and harmony among the people If, however, in any part of the country the people concerned should break out into any form of violence, then the whole movement would lose its character as a movement of peace, even as a lute would begin to emit notes of discord the moment a single string snaps "

Since early morning (6-30 A M) till late in the evening, almost without a break Mahatmaji remained engaged in these consultations and discussions Even after 9 30 P M, when the Working Committee meeting was over, there was no relief for him, as fresh visitors came in and engaged him in endless discussions In the meantime, about 7 P M, when important matters concerning Civil Disobedience were under discussion, I had left the place and gone to Seth Jamnalal's lodging in Chandney Chowk, and partook of my evening fare there I was thus in readiness to attend to Mahatmaji as soon as he was free Finding that

there was no respite for Mahatmaji from the invasion of visitors, although it was past 9 30 P M , Mrs Sarojini Naidu took up a stern attitude, and taking her stand near the doorway prevented the entrance of visitors into his room Then the bed was made ready for Mahatmaji and Mrs Naidu left, bidding him good-night Then I began rubbing oil on Mahatmaji's head, chest, and feet Once awhile I heard him saying in a low tone— " Oh ! how terribly exhausted ! How can I possibly stand such strain ?" Then quietly in the course of a few minutes he fell into deep slumber

CHAPTER XVI

THE ALL-INDIA CONGRESS COMMITTEE AT DELHI

The 4th November being Friday, the Mussalman members of the A I C C must attend the noon prayers at the Juma Masjid It was, therefore, arranged that there should be a morning sitting of the A I C C from 9 to 11, to be followed by another which will sit at 2 in the afternoon and continue its proceedings late into the evening So from early morning we were busy preparing to be at the place of meeting before it was 9 With regard to this session of the A I C C, the reader has already been told that it was going to be held inspite of the ban placed upon it by the then President of the Congress, Mr Vijayaraghavachari The reader is also aware that the question had been the subject of hot discussion in the newspapers The issue was—'What were the respective powers of the Congress President and the Congress Working Committee?' On this matter, the members of the Working Committee and the President had been at variance from the very first, but the difference had not assumed acute proportions until now The Working Committee had come into being for the first time in accordance with the revised constitution of the Congress* Before this, the President of the Congress had been exercising in his individual capacity emergency powers With the institution, however, of the Working Committee as the executive

* As laid down by the National Congress held at Nagpur, December 1920

of the A I. C C, those powers naturally devolved on the Working Committee Under the new rules, the members of the Working Committee had to be elected by the A I C C from among themselves The Working Committee, therefore, being its executive became vested with powers belonging to the A I C C In opposition to this, Mr. Vijayaraghavachari claimed the authority which belonged to the President when there was no Working Committee. As the upshot of this conflict of views, the Congress President kept away from the A I C C meeting, and in his absence Mr Lajpat Rai was voted to the chair

But the moment the motion for electing a chairman for the meeting was brought forward, Mr Jamnadas Mehta, a Bombay member rose and in loud, vehement tones protested that the President of the Congress having cancelled the meeting, it stood cancelled and nobody else was authorised to convene it Pandit Motilalji and Mr C R Das gave effective replies and Mr Mehta was silenced But he came out with another objection Admitting, he said, that the Working Committee had derived its authority from the A I C C, still as a subordinate body it must not be allowed quietly to appropriate all the powers of the latter body and it was this which the Working Committee had been doing Therefore, no member of the Working Committee should preside over the present meeting "But it may be,' continued he, 'that others may feel too shy to come forward and take the chair in the presence of such distinguished leaders of the Congress as Mahatma Gandhi, Mr Lajpat Rai, Mr C R Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru" Therefore, he would propose himself to the chair and with this he resumed his seat. This

strange proposal set the company in a roar of laughter Unfortunately, however, for Mr Mehta, no one came forward to second his proposition Then Mr Lajpat Rai was elected to the chair, and the meeting settled down to its work Mr Aney, the distinguished Berar leader, now brought forward a motion taking strong exception to the eligibility of the representatives for the Bengal and Madras Provinces to sit as members He explained that the last preceding Congress held at Nagpur had laid down certain Rules governing the election of members to the A I C C, but these Rules had not been followed in the Madras and Bengal elections, with the result that they had to be cancelled by the Congress President Therefore, concluded Mr Aney, his motion was that the Madras and Bengal representatives not having been duly elected should be required to vacate their seats Mr. Aney argued with the skill of a practised lawyer His proposal was duly seconded A Bengal member then got up, and speaking at the top of his voice tried to refute Mr Aney's arguments At this point Mahatmaji, who was the author of the new election Rules, intervened and explained their real bearing on the question at issue The matter then dropped In this way the Mahratta friends were experimenting with methods of obstruction and exploring how far obstructive tactics would pay They had come prepared to try such tactics and were acting in a perfectly organised manner

When all preliminary objections to the holding of the meeting had thus been got over Mr Purshottamdas Tandon, an Allahabad leader, proposed that the proceedings of the A I C C should be conducted in the national language, namely, Hindi, and further, that all Congress Commit-

tees should be instructed to employ Hindi in place of English Mr. Tandon's speech was delivered in beautiful Hindi But the moment he sat down, a Bengali member rose and with the preface, "I can also give a fine speech in Bengali," began to address the audience in that vernacular This Bengali reply to a Hindi speech set the whole house in a roar of laughter In this dilemma Mahatmaji sought a way of escape by proposing that the matter be referred to the Working Committee That saved the House from what threatened to be a linguistic disaster

Starting in this way with mirth and laughter, the members became more and more serious as they proceeded to the most important and solemn business of the day, namely, the consideration of the Resolution on Civil Disobedience It was clear that there was going to be no direct opposition to that Resolution, but every effort was made to tamper with the resolution by relaxing the terms laid down by Mahatmaji as conditions precedent to such Disobedience One of Mahatmaji's points was that moral fitness for embarking on a campaign of "civil disobedience" was to be gauged by the measure of success attained in hand-spinning and in the production and adoption of Khaddar for daily wear Round this clause waged a war of arguments and counter-arguments Then, again, the point was raised that it was not right to confine Mass Civil Disobedience to a particular centre, or to a single narrow area like Bardoli, but that, on the contrary, it could and should be started simultaneously in a number of different centres The argument was that if this was done, the Government would not be able to concentrate on any particular area and do its worst Apparently the protagonists of this view were thinking that by means of such

"disobedience" they could harass and embarrass the Government, and also, that by such procedure they would be able to reduce the chances of repression to a minimum It may be noted that behind these thoughts and ideas there was the interplay of a certain type of feeling which was not exactly favourable to Mahatmaji's cause, the cause of "civil" i e , peaceful disobedience , and which if not properly handled and kept under control might easily set in motion the forces of " criminal " disobedience, i e , armed conflict Indulging in the spirit of " harassing " and " embarrassing " the Government, the passive resisters could have no longer remained " passive," in the sense of their inviting and submitting to suffering at the hands of a violent Government For, the spirit of inflicting injury on Government, through the processes of " harassment ", and " embarrassment," would have by natural and gradual stages led on to a spirit of " active " resistance , that is to say a desire to inflict injury on the Government by the use of physical force That is why Mahatmaji was so very insistent on laying down rigorous conditions of qualification for those who would seek to embark on a course of civil disobedience Civil Disobedience as a political weapon was an altogether new thing Nobody in India had known of it before It was Mahatmaji who introduced this weapon for purposes of Indian political agitation And it was with this weapon in his hands that he made bold to declare a peaceful war against the indomitable might of the British Empire Naturally, therefore, the hearts of all brave, ardent spirits were centred on this new type of political warfare And yet, the one leader in this new form of struggle, who was recognised to be an expert and a veteran, was being hampered by his

followers He was demanding that with a view to add to the national strength, and ensure at the same time a peaceful atmosphere throughout the country, there was need to advance warily and to adopt certain preliminary steps of caution But the representatives of the people in the A I C C, it seemed, were too eager for the fray and were not quite prepared to go with Mahatmaji the whole way This appeared to me somewhat of a paradox If Mahatmaji must be given the supreme leadership in this war of Civil Disobedience, then it stood to reason that his plan of campaign must also be accepted It was increasingly clear to me that the members had not yet grasped the real nature of the struggle contemplated by Mahatmaji I felt that the members had not yet quite realised that it was not merely a revolt against the Government that Mahatmaji was preaching If the members had visualised the real character of the fight as contemplated by Mahatmaji, if they had, in fact, put as much emphasis on the non-violent aspect of the revolt, as on the revolt itself, then there would not have been such strong opposition to Mahatmaji's proposals as was actually in evidence at the A I C C meeting

A little before sundown Devadas and I returned to our quarters, for we had to arrange and take Mahatmaji's evening meal to the place of meeting I was detained there as my presence was specially required and Devadas took Mahatmaji's food to him That very night the amended Civil Disobedience Resolution received the assent of the All-India Congress Committee The next day, the 5th November, the Committee had a final sitting from 11 A M, to 1-30 P M, and passed a number of other Resolutions also I must not omit to mention here the skill,

tact and ability with which Mr Lajpat Rai conducted the proceedings and which made the session truly famous The A I. C C meeting over, we returned to our quarters Then about 4-30 P M the Working Committee met again in Mahatmaji's room It soon filled again with a vast throng of visitors

The full text of the famous Civil Disobedience Resolution as passed on the 4th November at the Delhi session of the All-India Congress Committee is given below —

"Whereas there is not much over one month for the fulfilment of the national determination to establish Swaraj before the end of the year, and whereas the Nation has demonstrated its capacity for exemplary self-restraint by observing perfect non-violence over the arrest and imprisonment of the Ali Brothers and the other leaders, and whereas it is desirable for the Nation to demonstrate its capacity for further suffering and discipline sufficient for the attainment of Swaraj,

"The All-India Congress Committee authorises every Province, on its own responsibility to undertake Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes, in the manner that may be considered the most suitable by the respective Provincial Congress Committees subject to the following conditions —

" (1) In individual Civil Disobedience, the individual must know hand-spinning and must have completely fulfilled that part of the programme which is applicable to him or her, e g , he or she must have entirely discarded the use of foreign cloth and adopted only hand-spun and hand-woven garments, must be a believer in Hindu-Muslim Unity, and in the unity amongst all the communities

professing different religions in India as an article of faith, must believe in non violence as absolutely essential for the redress of the Khilafat and the Punjab wrongs and the attainment of Swaraj, and if a Hindu, must by his personal conduct show that he regards untouchability as a blot upon nationalism ,

"(2) In the event of mass Civil Disobedience, a District or Tehsil should be treated as a unit, and therein a vast majority of the population must have adopted full Swadeshi and must be clothed out of cloth hand-spun and hand-woven in that District or Tehsil, and must believe in and practise all the other items of Non-Co-operation

" Provided that no civil resister should expect to be supported out of public funds, and members of the families of civil resisters undergoing sentence will be expected to support themselves by carding, hand-spinning and hand weaving or any other means

" Provided further that upon application by any Provincial Congress Committee, it is open to the Working Committee to relax the conditions of Civil Disobedience, if it is satisfied that any condition should be waived '

Though the above Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee gave power to every Provincial Committee to start Civil Disobedience on its own responsibility, yet Mahatmaji took care by means of informal conversations to warn the representatives of the several Committees against precipitate action He told them that " the time for exercising their power had not then arrived Therefore, he enjoined them to concentrate, in the first instance on the fulfilment of the Spinning and Khaddar programme, and then to finish by fulfilling the other conditions

vital to the maintenance of the peaceful character of the struggle In the meantime, he would have launched his campaign of Civil Disobedience at Bardoli. At that time it would be the duty of every other Province closely to watch the course of happenings at Bardoli and taking lessons therefrom, train and equip themselves for action whenever called upon " Thus instructed by Mahatmaji as regards their responsibilities as representatives of the Provincial Committees in the matter of starting mass civil disobedience within their respective jurisdictions, the different Provincial leaders bade him farewell

Seth Jamnalal, when about to depart, said to me, — 'Krishnadasji, I know you would never leave Bapuji's side, otherwise I would have obtained his permission to take you with me to Wardha "* I also in my turn now took my final leave of Sethji For, I was cherishing the hope that when Mass Civil Disobedience would be launched at Bardoli, and there would be firing of shots by the military, I should be at Mahatmaji's side Already it was reported that the Government were anxious to arrive at an understanding, and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was already there to interview Mahatmaji in connection with the Government offer to restore Smyrna and Thrace to Turkey. Panditji pressed the matter earnestly, but the report was that Mahatmaji was able without much difficulty to bring home to the former the futility of the suggestion In the meantime, the decision was arrived at that on the 23rd of the month an ultimatum was to be sent to the Government, and that for that purpose there was to be on the 22nd, a meeting of the Working Committee to which all the

* In the Central Provinces of India, where Sethji lives.

great leaders were to come once again for final deliberations Those of us who were there, and in constant contact with Mahatmaji receiving his inspiration, now began to indulge in the hope that if by God's grace Mahatmaji's efforts in the way of a non-violent revolt of the people, based wholly on their power of self-suffering as against the onslaughts of military violence, should be crowned with success, then a a civilised method of winning freedom should have been discovered, replacing the barbarous methods of violence in vogue all the world over In that way, we began to hope, that the success of Mahatmaji's experiment should have revolutionised the whole course of the world's thoughts and added a luminous page in its unending story

CHAPTER XVII

FIVE DAYS' TOUR

Mahatmaji would have much liked if he could hasten back to Gujarat as soon as his business at Delhi had been finished, for his whole heart was set on completing the preparations for Civil Disobedience at Bardoli But though he could decline every one of the many invitations that were then pouring in upon him from different parts of the country, he could not decline Mr Lajapat Rai's, to come and spend at least one day at Lahore, so that he could preside at the Convocation of the Punjab National University which had been fixed for the 9th November On the 6th November was held at Delhi the sixth session of the All-India Hindu Sabha, which Mahatmaji attended, while the 7th being a Monday, was his day of silence and was passed also at Delhi Then, on the 8th at 8 A M, we left Delhi for Muttra where we arrived at 11 A M At Muttra, Mahatmaji was kept busily engaged for the rest of the day in connection with the Muttra Political Conference Then in the evening we left for Lahore by the Peshawar Mail

A little before our departure from Delhi, an orderly came in great hurry with a letter and earnestly requested an immediate reply The letter was from an American lady, Miss Gertrude Emerson, who had been for a few days past seeking an opportunity to meet Mahatmaji, and who had than arrived in Delhi with that object in view Mahatmaji, who was about to start for the station, replied to Miss Emerson, mentioning the dates of his stay at different

places in the course of his tour Accordingly, Miss Emerson left Delhi and got into the very train by which Mahatmaji was to travel from Delhi to Lahore, and succeeded in coming up with him for the first time at Ferozepur whence she followed him as far as Lahore Afterwards, this lady, eager and enthusiastic, paid a visit to the Satyagrahashram at Sabarmati and had a long interview with him She then told him that she intended to proceed to Europe from India *via* Constantinople When she was about to take leave, Mahatmaji spoke to her of the probability of his incarceration at no distant date, and so desired to bid her a long farewell At this, this cultured lady, although separated from Mahatmaji by a wide gulf of race and creed, seemed visibly moved

Then there was an English gentleman, a Christian Missionary, who after a number of attempts at last succeeded in interviewing Mahatmaji He was enthusiastic in his eulogies of Mahatmaji for his having succeeded in awakening a desire among the masses to reform and purify their lives and character The missionary gentleman was leaving shortly for England and expressed his eagerness to be the bearer of a message from Mahatmaji to the English people He took out from his pocket a white Khaddar cap which he had bought at the bazaar He would take it to England as a memento of the present movement Mahatmaji's message was that "he entertained no hatred or ill-will towards anybody and that he was no enemy of England What he was doing in India for the benefit of the children of the soil would he was convinced also ultimately benefit England "

Here, however, I must not omit to mention an incident in which I had to take part, which paints in lurid colours a different side of the White man's character We had taken the Peshawar Mail at Muttra on our way to Lahore *via* Delhi, where the Mail stopped for over an hour It was then past 9 P M, and Mahatmaji had gone to bed Adjoining Mahatmaji's second class compartment was a third class compartment set apart for personal attendants of second class passengers I was entitled to enter that compartment, being one of Mahatmaji's personal attendants But an armed Gurkha sepoy, who was in that compartment took his stand at the door and prevented my entrance Anwar, who was accompanying Maulana Azad Sobhani, then came forward and gave a sharp rebuke to the Gurkha, who instantly left in a rage, to inform his officer Presently an English official—probably a Military officer—put in an appearance and in unparliamentary language bawled out that I should immediately get down In a gentlemanly manner I protested, but that only made him the more furious He seemed to be prepared to use force against me Then I went and saw Devadas in Mahatmaji's compartment. He came, with me and both of us now took our seats in the servants' compartment The English officer again tried to frighten and coerce us into leaving that compartment,—first, by using the language of threat, and when that failed, with the help of a European Railway official But this only led to an altercation, in the midst of which Devadas rather inadvertently let fall the words, "we are Mr Gandhi's servants" At the very mention of Mahatmaji's name, the two Europeans were dumbfounded The Railway official then said quite

apologetically—'Is Mr Gandhi travelling by this train? Then, it is all right You please take your seats" He then left, and the other gentleman also quietly withdrew. The Gurkha soldier now seeing the tables turned on his master in this most unexpected manner got demoralised, and though he continued to travel with me, for the rest of the night had not the courage to offer any further resistance

The next morning (9th November) we arrived at Ferozepur, which, after attending a meeting and doing other items of business, Mahatmaji left taking train at 9 30 At 12 noon we reached Lahore In Lahore, he was the guest of Lala Lajpat Rai Lalaji had founded a school known as the 'Tilak School of Politics" for whose accommodation he had given over a part of his own family-residence We had our quarters in this school-building The students of the school were unwearied in their attentions to us We have found that wherever Mahatmaji went, people gathered in their thousands and the place became almost a scene of public festivities So also here Here there was hurry and bustle on every side and there was rejoicing everywhere Mahatmaji was almost literally taken possession of by Lalaji, so that during the couple of days that he stayed at Lahore, we who were Mahatmaji's personal attendants were practically relieved of all anxiety on his score

A short while after we had been lodged, Mahatmaji left to attend a meeting of ladies At 5 in the afternoon, he had another meeting at the Bradlaugh Hall where he had to preside at the Annual Convocation of the National University of the province When he was about to leave for the meeting, he rather abruptly put

me the question—"Would you like to come with me?" I was puzzled I could not give an immediate answer I would go wherever I am wanted, in order to wait on him, otherwise I did not feel the urge or the need for attending any meeting Therefore, not knowing exactly what answer should be proper for me to make, I kept quiet When no answer came from me, Mahatmaji, rather sorry, as it seemed to me, said to me—"Very well, friend, Miss Emerson will be coming at 6 P M, you will attend to her," and with that he left I was much troubled by the feeling that Mahatmaji was not quite pleased at my keeping away from the Convocation ceremony So at last entrusting Pyeralal with the duty of attending to Miss Emerson, I went with Devadas to the Bradlaugh Hall meeting There I found Miss Emerson seated near Mahatmaji The Bradlaugh Hall was literally packed with people Being too far off from the speakers, we could not hear the speeches But the Hall was resounding with the frequent and continued cheering of thousands upon thousands of people, and by its reaction upon the nerves, it produced a thrill of excitement and intoxication quite incapable of expression It was an emotional experience of a unique character and when Devadas and I returned home, we were still under its spell

The whole of the next day was passed by Mahatmaji amidst almost a hurricane of engagements Firstly there was the ceremony of the opening of the Tilak School of Politics at which he had to preside, then he had to attend a meeting of the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee, then there was to be a meeting of the merchant community, then there was to be a com

sultation with the Udasi merchants, then, separate consultation with the leaders of the Hindu and Mussalman communities, and so on, and so on In the evening Mahatmaji attended a monster mass meeting Here the excitement and disorder passed all limits The huge audience refused to calm down So, without even attempting to address the meeting Mahatmaji had to dissolve it But now the multitude instead of dispersing in an orderly fashion began to behave in a most unruly manner All order and discipline was lost, and everybody was in danger of getting crushed by the impact of surging humanity, especially as the darkness of night had set in and enveloped the whole scene The meeting having been dissolved, we proceeded direct to the station and left Lahore by the 8-30 P M train

At the time I am speaking of taking a broad, general view of the situation one was lost in wonder and amazement,--amazement at the unity, enthusiasm and spirit of hopefulness visible on every side throughout the length and breadth of this vast country But here in the Panjab one seemed to notice a rift within the lute For here the Hindus and Muslims were still sharply divided on many matters which had bred communal animosities Mahatmaji tried his best to help in composing the communal differences, and to that end he did not spare himself But I was not quite clear in my mind as to whether his efforts had met with the necessary amount of success Then there was another matter before Mahatmaji for disposal It was the quarrel over the 'Lawrence Statue at Lahore between the Municipality and the Panjab Government The quarrel had

started about this time, and there was a proposal from the public that Civil Disobedience might very lawfully be launched to give effect to the Municipal decision to remove the statue Mahatmaji agreed that on this particular issue there was a case and an opportunity for engaging in Civil Disobedience But the real point in his opinion was whether it could be prosecuted with as much caution as the case demanded. If such a campaign should have to be be started it must be done after the fullest consideration, and after all adequate safeguards had been provided and in no case, according to him, should the group of civil resisters approaching the statue exceed five in number at a time I could clearly see that Mahatmaji had serious misgivings as to whether the Lahore people had the stamina to submit to rough-handling and persecution at the hands of the authorities, that is to say, without indulging in retaliation and creating a breach of the peace The previous day's incident at the Bradlaugh Hall had also given Mahatmaji an insight into the Lahore people's power of self-restraint Admittance into the Hall was to be regulated by tickets, and accordingly a fixed number of tickets had been issued to the public to suit the seating capacity of the Hall But people without tickets came and by sheer strength of numbers overpowered the volunteers, who had been posted to guard the door, and so forced an entrance In the circumstances, Mahatmaji had to appeal to the trespassers to leave the Hall, but no heed was paid to his appeal Thus, during his brief stay at Lahore, Mahatmaji saw that so long as the mass-mind continued to remain so uncontrolled and undisciplined as at Lahore, it was in no way safe to experiment with Civil Disobedience.

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CHAPTER XVIII

IN A FIX

We arrived at the Ashram about midnight on the 12th. On Sunday, the 13th, there was a meeting of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee, specially convened to devise ways and means to give effect to the Civil Disobedience Resolution of the All-India Congress Committee Mahatmaji attended the meeting The question was, which of the two Taluqas, Anand of the Kaira district, and Bardoli of the district of Surat, both under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Committee, should be entrusted with the task of initiating the Civil Disobedience movement The matter was keenly debated by the representatives of the rival claimants There was warmth of feeling evinced on both sides, but what impressed me was the utter absence of the display of ill-feeling, or anger, or impatience, or of the use of unparliamentary language, in the course of the discussion As a matter of fact I had never known before of a fight over a controversial matter carried on with so much gentleness, and good feeling The venerable Abbas Tyebji Saheb, as representing the Anand Taluqa, was the first to rise and plead his cause He began with a few words of mild rebuke addressed in the most endearing of terms to Mahatmaji Said he,—"Do tell us what more condition we have got to fulfil! This time we are determined not to let you go,—we are prepared to meet your demands to the full, only tell us once and for all, the whole of your terms Did you not call for a

crore of rupees, and have we not with one gigantic effort raised it for you? 'Go and produce Khaddar',—that has also been your call to us Now, look at me and satisfy yourself, whether, old as I am, I have not followed your call, and toured village after village till my old dry bones are beginning to rattle within me Now, come and visit the villages and see for yourself how matters stand, and if there is anything more to be done, let us know it now But you must assure us that you are not going to have a new fancy of yours and that all our hopes are not going to be dashed to pieces" The spirit of sweet submissiveness which informed every word of Tyebji Saheb's cast a spell over all, and I marvelled how Mahatmaji could draw all hearts as by a secret, irresistible power, and thus bind them all together though a common, central attraction That a septuagenarian like Mr Tyebji, one time Chief Justice of the State of Baroda, should have cast to the winds all thought of personal comfort and all thought of enjoyment of wealth and riches, and should have thus dedicated himself to the carrying out of Mahatmaji's programme with the dauntless energy and ardour of youth was indeed a most inspiring sight

The point urged by Tyebji Saheb was that it was in the district of Kaira (Gujarat) that the flag of Civil Disobedience was first hoisted,* and that in that connection the people of the Anand sub-division had undergone an excellent course of training in the practice and methods of Civil Disobedience Therefore, the right and privilege

* This has reference to the Non-payment of Revenue Movement at Kaira, inaugurated by Mahatmaji in 1918

of starting Civil Disobedience should in the first instance go to Anand But Mr Kalyanji, the intrepid worker of Surat (Gujarat), speaking on behalf of Bardoli, advanced a most fascinating plea in its favour Said he,—"The English first entered India through the gate of Surat, and it was there that they effected their first settlement, and it was from there that English influence, radiating as from a centre with slow, gradual steps overspread the whole Indian continent It is meet, therefore, that when the time for putting down that power has come, Surat should lead the way It is a right which inalienably belongs to her Is it not meet and proper that the way chosen for the entrance of the British should also be the way for their exit? In that way also Surat should have a chance of absolving herself of her original guilt" This striking and original plea urged by Kalyanji on behalf of Bardoli (a part of Surat district), visibly delighted the whole audience The discussion on the competing claims of the two Taluqas or sub-divisions went on apace, but it was finally decided that both had earned the right to start Civil Disobedience But although this was so, what was practically settled was this Mahatmaji was to undertake a tour of inspection, visiting first Bardoli, and then Anand, and as the result of such inspection, he should have to find out for himself which of the two centres was in a more advanced state of preparation, so that the fight might begin from there. Now, Mahatmaji had already planned to start for Bardoli on the 16th November, but both the Taluqas prayed for a couple of days more to complete their preparations Meantime, as was well-known, H R H the Prince of Wales was to land at Bombay on the 17th November on a visit to

India, and the Bombay non co-operators were solicitous that Mahatmaji should be present at Bombay on that day But he had no time, and had to decline repeated telegraphic messages of invitation sent by his own people there At last on the 15th November such an appealing request by wire came from the Secretary of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee that Mahatmaji had not the heart to refuse it It was, therefore, decided that he should reach Bombay on the morning of the 17th and leave again the same night, arriving in Surat on the morning of the 18th, and thence proceed to Bardoli

It was clear to me now that there was no prospect of our returning to the Ashram until after the task of Bardoli had been finally and successfully accomplished Nor could I anticipate where, or for how long, or under what circumstances should we find ourselves in the times that were coming Keeping in view these uncertain contingencies I had to make my preparations for the departure, arranging, selecting and packing up things While thus engaged I received on the 14th November an "Express" telegram from my teacher, Mr Mukerji, requiring me to be at the Ashram to receive an important letter from him And, again on the 15th, I had a second telegram from him saying, "I prefer your not going out" I was in a fix It was not possible for me to go against my teacher's express wishes But I had also certain definite tasks which Mahatmaji had assigned to me, and in regard to which he implicitly trusted me If, however, I must not leave the Ashram and accompany Mahatmaji in his impending tour, who was going to do the work for me? Could I without explaining matters to him clearly or without

making over my charge to a substitute, merely give out that I was not going to accompany him, or that I was not going to do my prescribed duties? When in the afternoon of the 15th the second telegram came, Mahatmaji and other inmates of the Ashram had gone out to the City to attend a meeting in celebration of the death anniversary of Premchand Roychand, a large-hearted Parsi millionaire of Bombay I had not gone but was alone in Mahatmaji's room keeping watch Receiving the telegram when thus alone, and reading its contents, I was tossed hither and thither by the currents of conflicting emotions I was sorely puzzled and perplexed There was my duty to my teacher, which was imperative, equally imperative was my duty to discharge the responsibilities of daily work which Mahatmaji had assigned to me Which of the two should have precedence? Again, for the last few days, in his letters Mukerji had been urging on me that "if I must needs undertake any new or special responsibility, I must make sure that I was not wanting in the necessary capacity, and that, secondly, before undertaking any such responsibility, it was incumbent on me to consult my innermost feelings In other words, he explained, I must be quite clear whether I was following the promptings of my heart, or whether I was merely drifting along the current, yielding to what after all was a temporary excitement or a temporary enthusiasm caused by extraneous circumstances" Lastly, he had been reminding me that "I was here with Mahatmaji charged with a definite mission, viz, to look after Mahatmaji's health, and his personal needs and comforts Therefore, my constant care should be that there was not the slightest remissness in the discharge of that particular duty If, however.

apart from that any independent, responsible work was proposed by Mahatmaji, I must exercise to the full my powers of reasoning and judgment before agreeing to accept it" Referring to something far better than mere reasoning as a guide to one's judgment, he had been telling me that "if one could still for the moment the external tumult of feelings and emotions, and get down to the deeper layers of one's consciousness, one could hear 'the still small voice within', the message of the soul telling him which way he should go. If one could decide on one's duty in the light of that message, then the path of one's duty was clear and free from error. Then one could fearlessly proceed on his own way, strong in the strength of the spirit within, even if the whole of the powers of the world combined to offer resistance" This part of his teaching I could follow in the abstract with the help of my intellect, but the question for me was—'Was I sufficiently advanced spiritually to be able unerringly to hear the Call of Truth?' I felt that for me to be able to do so was beyond my wildest dreams In that troubled state of mind, not knowing which way to turn I laid myself down by the side of Mahatmaji's bed on the open verandah adjoining his sitting room A little after evening, Mahatmaji returned from the City, looking very happy He began to talk to me quite cheerfully and questioned me on a variety of things If it had been any other day, I should have felt it a great boon to be thus addressed by Mahatmaji But that evening I just managed to stammer out some sort of replies to his many queries Alas! to so much kindness and friendliness of treatment, I could make no adequate response! I thought I would keep awake all night and try if I could possibly get some inkling of the truth about me from within.

But my body being weak, my limbs soon relaxed and I fell asleep without my knowing it

As arranged, we must leave for Bombay the following evening (16th Nov) and finding that I could not come to any decision myself, I thought of placing the whole matter before Mahatmaji So after the morning prayers when he was alone for a while, I quietly went and took my seat near him, and reading out to him some two or three of Mr Mukerji's letters and the telegrams, wanted to know what my duty was under the circumstances

He said,—"Just wait and see what you have in the letter to which Satish Babu refers you You can finally decide after going through its contents For we shall be returning next Sunday (20th November) I do not see, therefore, any harm in your going with me to Bombay to-day If you don't wish to go out with me after we return, I won't object"

Then, he went on to say —"If at Bardoli I am arrested, it does not follow that my Secretary should also be arrested At Waltair when Maulana Mahomed Ali was arrested, his Secretary was not arrested, as you know"

After a pause Mahatmaji went on to say —"Yes, if before accepting a responsibility, "the voice within" could be clearly heard, then of course that message becomes absolute But it is no easy thing to be able to receive such "higher inspiration" The pre-condition for it is that there must be a great 'crisis" of the soul when you are literally racked by "mental anguish and torture" In that crisis, the soul (of the individual) either soars higher and higher towards the Infinite Soul, or else, unable to bear the terrible strain falls back and finds rest in a closer associa-

tion with the physical body In the first alternative, the voice of Truth is heard, in the other, the individual gets identified with the world of matter, and shapes his conduct accordingly"

Mahatmaji's next words were these,—"The question, what should be your line of work after I am arrested has been occupying my thoughts for some time, and as the result of such consideration, I have come to the conclusion that, if you so choose, you can very well do the work of *Young India* That is why I have told you about it before But it may be that in my absence you may not feel quite the same encouragement to do the work If that happens, you may give it up"

Mahatmaji's concluding words were as follows —"What Satish Babu wishes, as I understand him, is that when I would be making my "final dispositions", you should not without full consideration allow yourself to accept any responsibility If that be so, I fully accept the position But to-day you can come along with me To that I do not see what objection there could possibly be"

To this I had nothing to say So I immediately sent a wire to Mr Mukerji at Benares, to the following effect — "In obedience to Mahatmaji's wishes I am leaving this evening with him for Bombay and shall be returning with him to the Ashram next Sunday"

That very day, when it was about noon, Mahatmaji's Dak (Mail) arrived, and with it I received Mr Mukerji's expected letter In view of the impending campaign a Bardoh, Mr Mukerji was anxious to explain to me what he thought about it, so that I might be helped in making up my mind as to my duty at the time of the "final dispositions

by Mahatmaji He wrote,—"He has nothing to say against the adoption of civil disobedience to combat iniquity and oppression when every other lawful remedy or effort has failed But although this is so, still we could not be too cautious about it For such disobedience based, as it must be, on Mahatmaji's ideal of voluntary sacrifice and suffering cheerfully accepted by the people as the penalty inflicted by the oppressor, for such disobedience, must not be converted into the other kind of disobedience namely, "uncivil", or criminal disobedience, whose one aim is to inflict violence, injury and suffering on the oppressor In the latter alternative, the disobedience instead of partaking of the character of a peaceful revolt of the people, such as Mahatmaji contemplates, becomes in fact an armed revolt, or something akin to it He is, therefore, of opinion that if the disobedience in question be prompted by the spirit of retaliation against the oppressor, or under conditions of temporary popular excitement or frenzy, then it would never be possible to make it a "civil," i e , non-violent, popular revolt Of all forms of "disobedience in Mahatmaji's programme, this one (mass civil disobedience) represents the final or the culminating stage Before, therefore, this weapon of mass civil disobedience, the ultimate and most difficult weapon in Mahatmaji's armoury could properly be wielded by the people at large, it is extremely necessary that for some time more the educated classes, who will have to guide the masses in this matter, should go on learning the lessons of voluntary sacrifice and suffering by undergoing a previous course of progressive training in the several "boycotts" as laid down in the Congress Resolutions.*

* *Vide* the principal Resolutions passed in September, 1920 and

"When these preparatory and comparatively easy lessons in self-sacrifice and self-suffering have been well learnt by the educated leaders and guides of the masses, so that the practice of voluntary withdrawal of services from Government has become easy and habitual for them, then only would they acquire the moral right, as also the strength and confidence, to call upon the people at large to follow them fearlessly in a campaign of sacrifice and suffering on a mass-scale, such as is necessarily involved in mass civil disobedience But as long as Government schools and colleges, Government law-courts and legislatures, official functions, durbars and levees, continue to have a secret fascination for the educated classes, so long there is no gainsaying that the movement of voluntary sacrifice and suffering, which must precede any movement in favour of civil disobedience, as being the easier of the two, has not made much headway among the country's leaders Whence it follows that so long as this state of their moral dependence upon the Government continues, so long, the country's moral atmosphere and its moral relationship with the Government, are both favourable and helpful to the latter Therefore, under such conditions of dependence, the country will have to rely for what progress it can make mainly on Government support " "On the other hand," my teacher concedes that it is possible for the country's leaders without having passed through a course of preparatory training in voluntary sacrifice and suffering, to create a fit of excitement among the people by inflaming their passions, or they may even succeed in rousing in them

December, 1920 at the Calcutta (special) and Nagpur (annual) Sessions of the Indian National Congress.

the spirit of retaliation against the Government for the great wrongs inflicted on them by the latter He further concedes that in that way the leaders may be able to prepare the way for hostilities and revolt by the people But that clearly, he points out, would be no "civil" resistance, or "civil" revolt, and for non-co-operators pledged to non-violence it could not be thought of Therefore, if "civil" disobedience is undertaken by the masses at the instance of the leaders, before the leaders themselves have sufficiently imbibed the comparatively easy lessons of self-sacrifice and self-suffering as laid down in the several boycotts in the Congress Resolutions, his conviction was that the experiment would end in disaster"

With regard to my own duty at this time, Mr Mukerji warned me that I must not allow myself to be thrown off my feet by the general excitement, but must give the fullest consideration to all sides of the question before enlisting as a soldier in the army of civil resisters at Bardoli He next referred me to an article by Mahatmaji in the latest issue of *Young India* (10th November) under the caption, "The Momentous Issue", quoting from it the two following passages —

"He (the civil resister) invites imprisonment and other uses of force against himself, this he does because and when he finds the bodily freedom he seemingly enjoys to be an intolerable burden"

"Civil Resistance is a most powerful expression of a soul's anguish"

On the basis of these two extracts, Mr. Mukerji asked me to consider truthfully "whether the personal or bodily freedom I had been enjoying had really become intolerable

to me", and secondly, whether in respect thereof, I had been experiencing any "anguish of the soul" Further, he explained that "when any work is undertaken untruthfully, e g, by merely allowing oneself to drift along the current, or by being led away by the excitement of the moment, then, God's eye will never be on the work, and it will never succeed On the contrary, the chances are that evil will result, and the country will suffer" Lastly, quoting for my benefit the following sentence from the aforesaid article, "One perfect civil resister is enough to win the battle of Right against Wrong,"—he went on to remark that if the place of genuine civil resisters is filled by 'imitation' ones, then indeed the latter might for a time help to swell the ranks, but as for solving the country's problem, or enforcing its demands, that must remain a distant dream

Pondering over all these questions as stated in Mr Mukerji's letter, I felt myself more than ever at sea, and so with anxiety, fear and misgiving weighing on my heart, I set out for Bombay in the company of Mahatmaji

CHAPTER XIX

BOMBAY RIOTS—I

We arrived in Bombay early in the morning of the 17th November. The sun was shining in a clear sky. The four quarters were resplendent with his rays, and the whole city lay smiling under the bright canopy of Heaven As we drove from the station to our quarters, nothing unusual met our eyes The old familiar sights were there, and these were all But now on this very day, the Prince of Wales was to set foot on India's soil Elaborate preparations had accordingly been made, and entertainments of all sorts had been arranged by the authorities to ensure for the Prince a fitting welcome. The provision on a lavish scale of popular attractions and festivities at a time when pain and affliction like an iron dart had entered into the very heart of India's body politic struck me as evidence of an utter insensibility to the feelings of the people Toys are put into the hands of children to divert them, so that they may not cry out while suffering So also at this critical juncture in the history of India, India's children were sought to be soothed and diverted from their cries by a piece of political legerdemain which consisted in bringing to India's shores His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, and providing all manner of shows, festivities and entertainments in celebration of the event How else is it possible to account for the strange fact that the Prince was brought over to India during a time of the greatest stress and when discontent and revolution were stalking

across the land. The Congress authorities were able to see through the deep political game which the Government were determined on playing, and therefore they advised an all-India Hartal* on the very day of the Prince's landing (17th November) The prevailing conflict between the official and popular points of view got accentuated and indeed assumed fearful proportions through this question of the boycott of the Prince's visit In order that the Bombay people might not fall into the Government trap, the Bombay leaders had arranged for a mass-meeting under the presidency of Mahatmaji to be held at the other extremity of the city at the very time when the Prince was to land. In the meanwhile, the previous evening a score of Congress volunteers had been put under arrest on a charge of circulating the proclamation about the Hartal, and all the printed copies of notices over the names of the Congress leaders for distribution among the public kept in the Swaraj Sabha office had been surreptitiously got hold of and secretly removed

But all these efforts on the part of the Government to put a stop to the Hartal went for nothing The vast body of the general population boycotted the official demonstration in favour of the Prince, only the Europeans, the Eurasians, and the Parsis joining in it On the other hand, the mass meeting on the grounds adjoining the Elphinstone Mills over which Mahatmaji was to preside presented one vast sea of heads Mahatmaji proceeded to the meeting after having taken some rest at his lodging His address was devoted to explaining the absolute need of keeping the peace and observing non-violence He said that he was going to

* It means a voluntary cessation of all outside activities for purposes of demonstration of a deep public feeling

launch Civil Disobedience at Bardoli very soon, when probably there would be firing on the people by the military But whatever might happen to Bardoli, his one request to the people of Bombay was that they must under no circumstances allow themselves to be thrown off their balance At this meeting there were people with foreign caps on, and people wearing foreign garments The sight cut Mahatmaji to the quick On one side was piled up quite a heap of foreign clothing which were to be consigned to the flames Maulana Azad Sobhani, Pandit Nekiram and a few others having addressed the meeting, Mahatmaji went up to the pile and set it alight, and then left While returning home from the meeting in the company of Mr Revashanker in another car, I noticed big parties of mill-hands in a state of great excitement returning in motor lorries from the meeting to the city proper They were behaving boisterously, each party being under the guidance of a leader who was blowing a whistle and directing the course The meeting having been dispersed, thousands upon thousands were returning home While we were in the midst of this seething mass, I could not realise the situation as foreshadowed by the conduct of the mill-hands But further on at another point our car was pelted with stones Some of them fell into it We stopped the car, when some half-a-dozen mill-hands began to lay violent hands on it with long poles A gentleman dressed in handspun who was passing that way sharply reprimanded them and they dispersed. This was about 11-30 A M We returned home and forgot all about the incident It was nothing more than mere pranks on the part of naughty youngsters of the locality, so we thought.

When, however, it was 1 P M Mahatmaji was apprised that a serious outbreak was in progress, and that disorderly scenes were being enacted in different parts of the city In the company of a few associates, Mahatmaji left. Then about 5 in the afternoon, he had to go out again to stop further rioting Returning home from his first visit, he narrated to us how all those who had been driving in motor cars had been pounced upon and subjected to cruelties and indignities, and that even people clad in handspun had not escaped such disgraceful treatment The Parsis as a community having joined in the demonstration of welcome to the Prince, in defiance of the wishes of the general body of people, had been the target of attack When they were returning home from the Reception ceremony in honour of the Prince, the foreign caps and foreign garments on their persons were seized and consigned to the flames Many Parsi gentlemen had also been assaulted, and the report was that one or two Parsi ladies had also been hurt Many liquor shops had been smashed, and one motor car and two tramcars had also been burnt down A Police Station and another building had been set on fire and given over to the flames Four policemen had been beaten to death by *lathis* (long poles) and two more had sustained such severe injuries that there was little hope of their surviving The last two had been lying prostrate on the earth on the highway when Mahatmaji arrived and beheld the heart-rending scene A huge crowd had gathered and there was terrible noise and confusion all around When they saw Mahatmaji in their midst, they gave themselves up to frenzied demonstrations and began to shout 'Mahatma Gandhi ki jai' (i e victory to Mahatma Gandhi) He reproved

them and ordered them off. Sprinkling water on the face of the policemen he remained there for some time nursing them Then after having made arrangements for their removal to the hospital he left From every part of the city reports of frightful excesses, of murder, of rioting continued to pour in till ten in the night. Mahatmaji had been an eye-witness of such dreadful scenes, and the agony which he suffered is beyond description Thrown into a state of utter despondency, he began to indulge in such words of grief and bitter self-reproach as would melt even the stoniest-hearted amongst men He kept awake till one in the morning pouring out in this manner his deepest feelings. Weighed down by grief and remorse, he went on recalling the high hopes with which he had been directing the movement. He had been hoping that by the eighth of December, he should be in a position to place before the Government his final terms. But alas! those hopes had now all vanished into thin air And for this who else was responsible than his own self? That very morning when he had been addressing the meeting and expressing his sorrow that some amongst his hearers should be wearing foreign caps, he had seen those caps being forcibly removed by others, and on some previous occasions also, he had been a witness of similar acts and yet he had failed to protest against them The spirit of intolerance had gone on increasing unchecked, and had culminated in this huge conflagration at Bombay. Why from the very first he had not had the sagacity to stand up against every such exhibition of intolerance and violence,—such was the charge he went on repeating against himself in tones of bitter despair and self-reproach.

But his despair was intensified by reason of another

circumstance. Mahatmaji had come to believe that there were directing brains behind this outbreak of mob-violence. He had noticed at particular places some people of the class that usually attended public meetings taking the lead and directing the mob Further, at one particular point, Mahatmaji had appealed to the rioters to disperse and return to their homes, but they had refused to listen to him Mahatmaji's belief was that they were being controlled by outside agencies The incident had made the deepest impression upon his mind If at Bombay mob-violence was being engineered and directed by skilled hands from behind, then the launching of Civil Disobedience at Bardoli must remain a chimera Listening to these words of pain and despair from the lips of Mahatmaji, the picture of India's luckless future and of her misery stood out in bold relief before the mind's eye, and one had to struggle with himself to preserve one's mental equanimity

Mahatmaji gave expression to his thankfulness to God for His having opened his eyes and saved the situation "The Lord has saved me from a dire calamity I was most unwilling to come to Bombay, but God wanted me to see the sights that I have seen, and dragged me to Bombay If to-day I had stayed at Ahmedabad I might have easily belittled the happenings in Bombay and paid little heed to them But the terrible scenes that have been enacted before my own eyes could not possibly be put aside, and who knows what further disasters would await us if at this moment Civil Disobedience should be resorted to at Bardoli."

That very night Mahatmaji cancelled his original programme of visiting Surat and Bardoli and sent his son

Devadas to Surat to carry the news about the Bombay riots He also sent word through Devadas that all preparations for Civil Disobedience must be suspended When it was past eleven at night a party of enthusiastic young men and volunteers came and reported that for all practical purposes the city was quiet But that did not pacify Mahatmaji who continued to remain in a state of anxious suspense about the immediate future

The next morning (18th November), the sun rose lighting up every quarter of the heavens with a tranquil splendour and all Nature put on a smiling countenance But those smiles of Nature, alas ! what are they ? Thou, Goddess, do thou cease to spread before man the net of thy enchanting beauty, which makes him thy dupe! For within the folds of thy external charms lie concealed the coils of thy cruelty and inhumanity Why else should thy lovely hills and dales, thy sweet murmuring brooks and springs, and thy forests of vast surpassing grandeur nurse in their breasts wild ferocious beasts and animals? So also within the bosom of that day, lit up with effulgent rays falling from a clear, cloudless sky, lay quietly hid a dark mass of barbarities and inhumanities such as few could have conceived

From the reports that had been reaching us since the morning it seemed as though the virulence of this epidemic of madness had spent itself out, and that the general body of the population been restored to sanity and would resume the normal course of their respective daily duties But it was the lull before the storm, the lull that precedes the final cataclysmic storm, when the winds of destruction are let loose. Of this not one single person had the remotest idea

at the time Reaction follows action, as a matter of course On the previous day, the Parsi, the Eurasian and the Jewish residents of Bombay had to meet a most unexpected attack But to-day they were adequately armed and frantic with rage, were thirsting for revenge

Meanwhile, the Non-co-operators on the local Congress Committees had been roused to action, and parties of Congress volunteers and Congress leaders were seen going about, visiting the excited mob in different parts of the city and trying to pacify them The day previous, the event had come as a bolt from the blue and had stunned everybody and no adequate steps could be taken to combat it But to-day there was no remissness anywhere Every worker was up and doing and determined that the disorders should come to a speedy end, even if he had to lay down his life in the attempt At half-past nine in the morning Mr Moazzam Ali, brother-in-law of Maulana Mahomed Ali, came with two fellow-workers from the Khilafat Committee's office to inform Mahatmaji that they had gone about inspecting the different quarters of the city and that they had found peace everywhere Similarly also others came and saw Mahatmaji, and gave him reassuring news, seeking to alleviate his misery and anxiety But while all this was going on and Mr Moazzam Ali had not left, we were rung up, and the disquieting news came that the mill-hands at Parel were holding up tramcars and that an attack on the Parsi community in the neighbourhood was apprehended Our informant on the telephone piteously implored Mahatmaji's help, fearing that unless immediate steps were taken to bring the mill-hands under control, rioting, robbery and arson would in all likelihood

ensue Mahatmaji was then busy writing an article under the caption, "A Deep Stain," for *Young India* in which he was narrating the previous day's incidents of which he had been an eye-witness He, therefore, deputed Maulana Azad Sobhani and Mr Moazzam Ali, with half-a-dozen young men to go and visit Parel immediately, and with instructions to try and prevent a riot, promising to go to the spot himself as soon as the article was finished

After the Maulana Saheb had left with his party, we had to spend every moment of our time in a state of the greatest suspense awaiting news as to what happened next Half-an-hour had not passed when I saw Mr Moazzam Ali with only two of his assistants returning in a 'victoria' But what a sight! They were all bleeding, blood streaming profusely from all parts of their bodies But where was the car? Where, again, was Maulana Azad Sobhani? What had become of the other three companions? Mr Moazzam Ali's wounds were less serious and he could give a connected account of what had happened A party composed of Parsis, Eurasians and Jews had attacked them, smashed their car, and brutally assaulted them He could not tell whether after all Maulana Azad Sobhani and the three others were still alive, or what had become of them The two Khilafat workers were too severely wounded to be able to state anything coherently. They only pointed to their broken heads, and wounds all over their bodies, and then with choked breath went on repeating the cry, like one suffering from delirium— "We also have given of our blood! We also have given of our blood!" We were already engaged in rendering first aid to this party of three, but shortly after, one by

one, the other young men arrived, but in what horrible condition! One of them had a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds all over his body, and there was danger of his succumbing The other two could boast of graceful, healthy bodies, but they had been subjected to such terrible assaults, that with lacerated wounds all over them they lay crumpled up on the floor like inert lumps of flesh The cry of pain which they involuntarily uttered as soon as they came in sight of Mahatmaji pierced his heart like an arrow, and he sat by their side consoling and comforting them. In the meantime arrangements for their proper nursing and treatment were proceeded with

We had not, however, had any news of the fate of Maulana Azad Sobhani, and our apprehensions and anxiety on his score went on increasing every moment But who would now care to go out alone along the highways to court certain death? Mahatmaji said not a word but sat in his own seat, composed and silent, and went on writing his article He wrote —

' I am writing this in the midst of six Hindu and Mussalman workers who have just come in with broken heads and bleeding, and one with a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds, and in danger of losing his life. They went to Parel led by Moulanas Azad Sobani and Moazzam Ali to pacify the mill-hands, who, it was reported, were holding up tramcars there. The workers, however, were unable to proceed to their destination They returned with their bleeding wounds to speak for themselves"

And he continued --"Thus the hope of reviving mass Civil Disobedience has once more been dashed, in my opinion, to pieces. The atmosphere for mass Civil Dis-

obedience is absent It is not enough that such an atmosphere is to be found in Bardoli and therefore it may go on side by side with the violence in Bombay This is impossible"

As originally settled, the Working Committee was to meet at Surat on 22nd November, 1921, and arrive at a final decision on the question of Civil Disobedience Bardoli was to be given the permission to launch Civil Disobedience In the course of his article, "A Deep Stain", Mahatmaji, therefore, explained his own position in the light of the altered circumstances His opinion was that the Working Committee could not ignore the altered situation, but must consider in the light thereof whether mass Civil Disobedience could at all be encouraged until they had obtained complete control over the masses Mahatmaji had himself deliberately come to the conclusion that mass Civil Disobedience could not be started at least for some time to come He confessed to his inability to conduct Civil Disobedience to a successful issue unless and until a completely non-violent atmosphere had come into being He was sorry for the confession It was a humiliating confession to make of his incapacity, but he was certain that he would appear more pleasing to his Maker by proclaiming what he was, instead of appearing to be what he was not He emphasised that he would have nothing to do with the organised violence of the Government. But he could have still less to do with the unorganised violence of the people He would prefer to be crushed between the two while engaged in a relentless war with both

CHAPTER XX

THE BOMBAY RIOTS—II

For the benefit of the reader is reproduced below the whole of Mahatmaji's article entitled "A Deep Stain" to which reference has already been made in the last chapter. It would be seen that for the launching of Civil Disobedience *en masse*, the claims of non-violence and peace are absolute and can never be ignored. Unfortunately, however, this part of Mahatmaji's teaching was not always and everywhere welcomed or appreciated or stressed by the general body of workers and leaders to the extent that was necessary. Hence the violent scenes enacted at Bombay. The article by Mahatmaji, it is hoped, will enable the reader to have a more thorough insight into and grasp of the fundamental teaching.

"The reputation of Bombay, the hope of my dreams, was being stained yesterday even whilst in my simplicity I was congratulating the citizens upon their non-violence in the face of provocation. For the volunteers with their captain were arrested during the previous night for pasting posters under authority on private property. The posters advised the people to boycott the welcome to the Prince. They were destroyed. The Swaraj Sabha's office was mysteriously entered and the unused posters, so far as I am aware not declared unlawful, were also removed. The Prince's visit itself and the circumstances attending the ceremonials arranged and public money wasted for the manufacture of a welcome to His Royal Highness constituted an unbearable provocation. And yet Bombay had remained self-restrained. This, I thought, was a matter for congratulation. The burning of the pile of foreign

cloth was an eloquent counter-demonstration to the interested official demonstration

Little did I know that at the very time that the Prince was passing through the decorated route and the pile of foreign cloth was burning in another part of the city the mill-hands were in criminal disobedience of the wishes of their masters emptying them, first one and then the others, by force, that a swelling mob was molesting peaceful passengers in the tramcars and holding up the tram traffic, that it was forcibly depriving those that were wearing foreign caps of their head-dresses and pelting inoffensive Europeans As the day went up, the fury of the mob now intoxicated with its initial success rose also They burnt tramcars and a motor, smashed liquor shops and burnt two

I heard of the outbreak at about 1 o'clock I motored with some friends to the area of disturbance and heard the most painful and the most humiliating story of molestation of Parsi sisters. Some few were assaulted, and even had their *sadis* torn from them No one from among a crowd of over fifteen hundred who had surrounded my car denied the charge, as a Parsi with hot rage and quivering lips was with the greatest deliberation relating the story An elderly Parsi gentleman said, "Please save us from this mob rule" This news of the rough handling of Parsi sisters pierced me like a dart I felt that my sisters or daughters had been hurt by a violent mob! Yes, some Parsis had joined the welcome They had a right to hold their own view, free of molestation Their can be no coercion in Swaraj The Moplah fanatic who forcibly converts a Hindu believes that he is acquiring religious merit A non-co-operator or his associate who uses coercion has no apology whatsoever for his criminality.

As I reached the "Two Tanks," I found a liquor shop smashed, two policemen badly wounded and lying unconscious on cots, without anybody caring for them I alighted. Immediately the crowd surrounded me and yelled "Mahatma Gandhi-ki jai." That sound usually grates on my ears, but it has grated never so much as it did yesterday when the crowd unmindful of

the two sick brethern choked me with the shout at the top of their voices. I rebuked them and they were silent. Water was brought for the two wounded men I requested two of my companions and some from the crowd to take the dying policemen to the hospital. I proceeded then to the scene a little further up where I saw a fire rising There were two tramcars which were burnt by the crowd On returning, I witnessed a burning motor car I appealed to the crowd to disperse, told them that they had damaged the cause of the Khilafat, the Punjab and Swaraj I returned sick at heart and in a chastened mood

At about five, a few brave Sindhi young men came to report that in Bhindi Bazaar the crowd was molesting every passer-by who had a foreign cap on and even seriously beating him, if he refused to give up his cap A brave old Parsi who defied the crowd and would not give up his *Pugree* was badly handled. Maulana Azad Sobhani and I went to Bhindi Bazaar and reasoned with the crowd, told them that they were denying their religion by hurting innocent men The crowd made a show of dispersing The Police were there but they were exceedingly restrained We went further and on retracing our steps, found to our horror a liquor shop on fire Even the fire brigade was obstructed in its work Thanks to the efforts of Pandit Nekiram Sharma and others the inmates of the shop were able to come out

The crowd did not consist of hooligans only or boys It was not an unintelligent crowd They were not all mill-hands. It was essentially a mixed crowd unprepared and unwilling to listen to anybody For the moment it had lost its head. And it was not a crowd but several crowds numbering in all not less than twenty thousand It was bent upon mischief and destruction

I heard that there was firing resulting in deaths and that in the Anglo-Indian quarters every one came in for hard beating, if he did not put off his *Khadi* cap or shirt. I heard that many were seriously injured. I am writing this in the midst of six Hindu and Mussalman workers who have just come in with

broken heads and bleeding and one with a broken nasal bone and other lacerated wounds and in danger of losing his life They went to Parel led by Maulanas Azad Sobhani and Mozzam Ali to pacify the mill-hands, who, it was reported, were holding up tramcars there The workers, however, were unable to proceed to their destination They returned with their bleeding wounds to speak for themselves

Thus the hope of reviving mass Civil Disobedience has once more in my opinion been dashed to pieces. The atmosphere for mas Civil Disobedience is absent It is not enough to say that such an atmosphere is to be found in Bardoli, and, therefore, it may go on side by side with the violence in Bombay This is impossible. Neither Bardoli nor Bombay can be treated as a separate, unconnected unit They are parts of one great indivisible whole It was possible to isolate Malabar It was also possible to disregard Malegaon But it is not possible to ignore Bombay

Non-co-operators cannot escape liability It is true that Non-co-operators were ceaselessly remonstrating everywhere with the people at considerable risk to themselves, to arrest or stop the mischief and that they are responsible for saving many precious lives But that is not enough for launching out on Civil Disobedience or to discharge us from liability for the violence that has taken place We claim to have established a peaceful atmosphere, i e, to have attained by our non-violence sufficient control over the people to keep their violence under check. We have failed when we ought to have succeeded. For yesterday was a day of our trial We were under our pledge bound to protect the person of the Prince from any harm or insult And we broke that pledge, inasmuch as any one of us insulted or injured a single Europern or any other who took part in the welcome to the Prince They were as much entitled to take part in the welcome as we were to refrain. Nor can I shirk my own personal responsibility I am more instrumental than any other in bringing into being the spirit of revolt. I find myself not fully capable of controlling and disciplining that spirit I must do penance for it For me the

struggle is essentially religious I believe in fasting and prayer, and I propose henceforth to observe every Monday a twenty-four hour fast till Swaraj is attained

The Working Committee will have to devote its attention to the situation and consider in the light thereof whether Mass Civil Disobedience can be at all encouraged until we have obtained complete control over the masses I have personally come deliberately to the conclusion that Mass Civil Disobedience cannot be started for the present I confess my inability to conduct a campaign of Civil Disobedience to a successful issue uuless a completely non-violent spirit is generated among the people I am sorry for the conclusion It is a humiliating confession of my incapacity , but I know that I shall appear more pleasing to my Maker by being what I am, instead of appearing to be what I am not It I can have nothing to do with the organised violence of the Government, I can have less to do with the unorganised violence of the people I would prefer to be crushed between the two"

CHAPTER XXI

HOW TO RESTORE PEACE

Less than three hours after, Maulana Azad Sobhani returned safe and sound He had not had a scratch on his body, a fact at which we felt surprised He said that the Parsi and the Eurasian rioters singled out those who wore white Khaddar caps (Gandhi caps), and brutally assaulted them The Maulana Saheb escaped as he had no cap on, and in the confusion of the *melee* he quietly got inside a wrecked tramcar and nobody saw him Ever since Mahatmaji had begun putting on his loin-cloth dress, Maulana Saheb had discarded his cap, except at the time of his prayers, as such wearing is enjoined by Muslim law

God was particularly merciful that day, for if only Mahatmaji had started for Parel, instead of remaining at home engaged in the writing of his article, and if in that event, he had received any injuries at the hands of the Parsi and European youths, then not merely in Bombay, but the whole country over, rivers of blood would have flowed, and none could have prevented the same

Even as the Parsis and Eurasians had banded themselves together to molest and assault innocent passers-by clad in Khaddar, so also the Hindus and Mussalmans among the lower classes roused to fury began to organise themselves into bands and invaded the Parsi quarters and gave themselves up to pillage, incendiarism and other frightful excesses They thus brought disgrace upon their respective religions and besmirched the fair fame of India I would not defile the

pages of this book with a recital of these unfortunate and horrible outbursts of passion The masses of Bombay, Hindus and Mussalmans on one side, and Parsis and Christians on the other, seemed to have no other thought for the moment than that of attacking and counter-attacking and doing all possible injury each to the other They had been helplessly caught in a mighty whirlporl of passion out of which it was impossible for them to extricate themselves The violence of the Hindu and Mussalman aggressors had been followed by the retaliatory violence of the Parsis and Christians , but this only roused to added fury the original aggressors and so there seemed to be no way out of this never-ending circle of violence and of passion

The Parsis having applied to the Government for guns and revolvers for self-defence and having obtained them set about attacking different quarters of the city killing and wounding a considerable number of Hindus and Mussalmans These latter had no weapons besides big poles and brickbats, but they had the strength of numbers, and here and there they forced their entrance into Parsi homes and committed barbarities It was also found that when the rioting was on the police although at hand did not choose to exert themselves to put a stop to it On the other hand, in some cases at least, they were found to have openly sided with the Parsis and aided them Thus, at midday in broad daylight a band of armed Parsi youths attacked and smashed the well-known confectioner Mr Govind Vasant's shop, and having brutally assaulted him went away leaving him half-dead. And all this took place in front of the Police Station of the locality We were apprehensive lest a similar party of Parsi youths mad with rage should force

their way into Mahatmaji's residence and make an attempt on his life A guard of volunteers was therefore posted at the very entrance of our house So also we were on our watch lest there should be firing from the roofs of contiguous buildings Nothing may legitimately be said against the Parsis who were thirsting for revenge Firstly, they had not started the game, they were the victims of Hindu and Muslim aggression Then their women had been insulted and ill-treated In the circumstances, it was no wonder that the spirit of vengeance and fury should have possessed them Lastly, and the worst feature of it all was that in the course of the rioting an act of unprecedented sacrilege had been done to the Parsis More than a thousand years ago, the Parsis had left their native homes in Persia to seek an asylum in India for the preservation of their own religion against the attacks of the Muslim invaders of Persia. Through all these centuries the Parsis had been living in India in peaceful enjoyment of their religious liberties and no outsider had hitherto dared to enter their temples and destroy their sanctity by acts of sacrilege But on the present occasion a Hindu-Muslim band of rioters dared to force their way into an "Atas Bairam" or "Fire-Temple", and extinguished the sacred Fire Such Fire, as is well known, is kept perpetually burning, for worship by Parsi devotees on whom Fire-worship is enjoined by their religion Could anything more distressing and mortifying to the Parsis be imagined? A mild-mannered Parsi gentleman well advanced in years, while referring to this incident said that the Parsi community as a body were quite prepared to be destroyed wholesale fighting for the preservation of the sanctity of their religion

The situation in which Mahatmaji thus found himself was indeed depressing and most painful What could he possibly do under the circumstances? Letters had begun to pour in upon him from all quarters, letters full of harrowing details and cries of distress, letters, also, full of the foulest abuse, and invoking curses on his devoted head Among the writers of these letters were people who had been violently assaulted, those also who had been robbed or despoiled of their possessions, others again who had lost their sons or daughters by the murderous acts of the infuriated mob Mahatmaji would read out these letters to all who were constantly by his side The woes and sufferings of these men and women pierced his heart like a shaft Already, finding that the riots were not going to end soon, he had ceased taking any food, while in his article he had also announced that he must undergo a fast for twenty-four hours every Monday But the problem which was racking him was how to check the rising flames of anarchy now slowly enveloping every quarter of the city The whole of the day was passed under the strain of incessant toil and agonising thoughts, till at last towards evening he felt exhausted and laid himself down to rest, asking me to rub oil on his forehead and his back But even so, a minute's rest was denied to him For Mr Jamnadas Dwarkadas came in just then and was granted a prolonged interview lasting till ten, and when he went to bed, it was 10-30 He was extremely weak and tired, and so I thought I must be with him in his room for the night, and I accordingly laid myself down there near him When it was half-past three in the morning, all on a sudden, Mahatmaji woke up and turned the switch on I was awakened and he

immediately asked for pencil and paper and began writing out something in hot haste. It was quickly done, and I was directed to make three clean copies. Mr. Mathradas (Tricrumji), Congress worker of Bombay, was there. He was asked to read out the original to me and I was to make the copies. Mahatmaji forbade all remarks, comments, objections or queries relating to the document. The words came from him in such a solemn tone that one felt awed and it was not possible for even the most forward amongst us to utter even a single word by way of comment. The following is the full text of what he wrote :—

" Men and women of Bombay,

" It is not possible to describe to you the agony I have suffered during the past two days. I am writing this now at 3-30 A. M. in perfect peace. After two hours' prayer and meditation, I have found it.

" I must refuse to eat or drink anything but water, till the Hindus and Musalmans of Bombay have made peace with the Parsis, the Christians and the Jews, and till the non-co-operators have made peace with the co-operators.

" The Swaraj that I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils. Hindu-Muslim unity has been a menace to the handful of Parsis, Christians and Jews. The non-violence of the non-co-operators has been worse than the violence of co-operators. For, with non-violence on our lips, we have terrorized those who have differed from us, and in so doing we have denied our God. There is only one God for us all, whether we find him through the Koran, the Zend Avesta, the Talmud, or the Gita. And he is God of Truth and Love. I have no interest in living, save for proving this faith in me. I cannot hate

an Englishman or any one else I have spoken and written much against his institutions, especially the one he has set up in India I shall continue to do so if I live But you must not mistake my condemnation of the system for that of the man My religion requires me to love him as I love myself I would deny God if I did not attempt to prove it at this critical moment

"And the Parsis? I have meant every word I have said about them Hindus and Musalmans will be unworthy of freedom if they do not defend them and their honour with their lives They have only recently proved their liberality and friendship The Musalmans are especially beholden to them, for the Parsis have, compared to their numbers, given more than they themselves to the Khilafat funds Unless Hindu and Musalmans have expressed full and free repentance, I cannot face again the appealing eyes of Parsi men and women that I saw on the 17th instant as I passed through them Nor can I face Andrews when he returns from East Africa, if we have done no reparation to the Indian Christians whom we are bound to protect as our own brothers and sisters We may not think of what they or the Parsis in self-defence or by way of reprisals have done to some of us

'You can see quite clearly that I must do the utmost reparation to this handful of men and women who have been the victims of forces that have come into being largely through my instrumentality I invite every Hindu and Musalman to do likewise But I do not want any one to fast. Fasting is only good when it comes in answer to prayer and as a felt yearning of the soul. I invite every Hindu and Musalman to retire to his home, ask God for

forgiveness, and to befriend the injured communities from the bottom of his heart.

"I invite my fellow-workers not to waste a single word of sympathy for me I need or deserve none. But I invite them to make a ceaseless effort to regain control over the turbulent elements This is a terribly true struggle There is no room for sham or humbug in it Before we can make any further progress with our struggle, we must cleanse our hearts

"One special word to my Musalman brothers I have approached the Khilafat as a sacred cause I have striven for Hindu-Muslim unity, because India cannot live free without it, and because we would both deny God if we considered one another as natural enemies I have thrown myself into the arms of the Ali brothers, because I believe them to be true and God-fearing men. The Musalmans have to my knowledge played the leading part during the two days of carnage It has deeply hurt me I ask every Musalman worker to rise to his full height, to realise his duty to his faith and see that the carnage stops

"May God bless every one of us with wisdom and courage to do the right at any cost

I am,

"*19th November 1921* Your servant,

M K GANDHI"

This appeal was printed in four languages, English, Gujarati, Marathi and Urdu, and distributed broadcast throughout the city on the 19th November, which was the third day of the disturbances But even though the flood tide has ceased to flow, it does not stop all at once So also in this case Mahatmaji had sounded his trumpet call

to peace But it took some time to rouse the Bombay populace to a sense of their duty At midday a volunteer came and delivered to Mahatmaji a written message from Mrs Sarojini Naidu who was then at a distance of only a ten minutes' walk from Mahatmaji's quarters It ran thus —"Please send a surgeon immediately, men dead, dying and wounded are lying on the road" The rioters on both sides, now grown equally furious, were dealing deadly blows at each other and there was no way of estimating the numbers of the wounded and the killed. Reports of murderous outbreaks and affrays were coming every minute on the telephone, from all quarters of the city One had, in fact, to sit always at the telephone with the receiver in his ear. On the other hand, we could not send out any message of our own on the 'phone The Head Office would not give us the connection Maulana Azad Sobhani Saheb's personal assistant, Anwar, ventured forth but came back after a while, seeing the dead bodies of two young men in Khaddar dress lying on the road They had been shot dead by the police, and were lying in a pool of blood The spot was dyed red with their bright, fresh blood Anwar had no Khaddar cap on and so escaped being assaulted But the shock of the sight had unnerved him and he sat musing in a corner of the room all by himself Then came the report that some thousands of Mawali hooligans had invaded a neighbouring quarter inhabited by Parsis and had set fire to a number of houses. The moment the news came, Mahatmaji sent Mr Khatri, one of the Secretaries of the Central Khilafat Committee, to the scene of disturbance Mr Khatri wielded very great influence over the Musalmans of Bombay, and if he

had not been confined to bed through illness during the first two days, the disturbances would not have attained such huge dimensions Mr. Chotani, the President of the Khilafat Committee had also been absent from Bombay at the time, which was unfortunate Mr Khatri, however, was able to prevail with the Mawalis He soon came back bringing with him their leader, who at the very sight of Mahatmaji began to shed tears while uttering the words—" Master, who would dare to lay hands on your person, so long as there is life left in our bodies" We came to learn from this man that the city was full of the rumour that Mahatmaji had been assaulted by the Parsis, and that the Mawalis had attacked a Parsi quarter to avenge the wrong Mahatmaji listened to him in silence, but as soon as he had ceased weeping, he addressed to him the following grave admonition —"Your words have given no pleasure to me Your ways are not mine Many a time I have been approached by Indian soldiers serving in the British Army to give them permission to rise in mutiny against the Government. But far from giving them the permission, I have condemned them for the ways of violence which they proposed I must tell you that you could never have my sympathy or support in any acts of brutality or violence" Then turning his face away from him he betook himself to his own work.

CHAPTER XXII

RESOLVED TO FAST AWAY LIFE

It was only two days that Devadas had left for Surat in obedience to Mahatmaji's directions, but to-day (19th November) he was called back to Bombay by wire When Devadas returned, Mahatmaji gave out that Devadas had been brought back on purpose He was to be sent out as a "sacrifice" for slaughter by the rioters, should a fresh outbreak occur in some neighbouring district

The fast was on, and yet Mahatmaji had not had a moment's leisure It was impossible for any outsider to have a conception of the heavy strain of work to which at the time he was put unless with one's own eyes one saw him working His body was thinning, and he was being reduced to a skeleton. Yet all the time he was surrounded by workers who had come to consult him as to how to put an end to the rioting, while he on his part with equal enthusiasm was bending his whole energies to the task. To us at times it seemed as if physically he had gained in stamina because of the fast He also would say—"I am feeling all the better for the fasting I have been enjoying a spell of unbroken peace within With the taking of nourishment one feels dull, inactive and inclined to sleep. No longer have I anything to do with easing nature or with sleep. Night and day, the whole of my time, without a break or pause, I am quite at rest within." Most of the time I would be near him, attending on him. The fact, however, was that he did not feel that any attention was

specially needed Sometimes when he wanted to leave his room, he would himself go out, tottering, he was so weak, so I would feel somewhat nervous Yet I could not call up courage to touch his person, nor would he ask for any assistance But there was one change which I noticed Occasionally he would get irritated But this irritation was shown only in respect of those of us who were in attendance upon him Thus he would give us just a little snubbing if we said anything irrelevant, or did anything foolish. One little incident may here be noted One Parsi gentleman came and was holding forth on the enormities of the Eurasian rioters He laid the whole blame of the riots on their shoulders Warming up he went on to say—"The Eurasians are a hybrid race, they and they alone have to answer for everything" This was too much for Mahatmaji, and he burst out with—"Such be your Swaraj! With such feeling rankling in your breast, do you hope to win Swaraj! To-day you will be accusing Eurasians of illegitimate birth The next day, they will retort and say, 'Not we, but the Parsis are bastards I have had enough of such Swaraj, it stinks in my nostrils Let me have no more of this hideous form of it" The Parsi gentleman quite abashed hung down his head and uttered not a word He had, however, come to mitigate, if possible, Mahatmaji's sorrow and misery, and had thought that by laying the blame on the shoulders of the Eurasians, he would be able somewhat to mitigate Mahatmaji's mental anguish But he had no idea that his was not the sort of character that could bear with patience indignities heaped upon others

The riots with their inhumanities had proved too much for Mahatmaji To-day (19th November) in the

course of conversation with those who were near about him, he would now and then let fall words which gave a clear indication that he was pining to leave his mortal frame At three in the afternoon he called me to his side and in Hindi spoke out his mind as follows,—"I cannot say for how many days more it will be possible for me to continue in this body The mere cessation of this carnage would not be enough for me So much only would not soothe my troubled spirits For the disturbances could be brought to an end in no time if only we would invoke the aid of the military, who would shoot down the rioters and restore order There is also another way The warring factions may go on fighting till they could fight no longer and are tired of mutual killing That way, of course, peace of a sort might be established But such peace is not what I have in view The picture of peace I have before my mind's eye is something wholly different, and till that materialises, I am resolved not to break my fast But the type of fraternal peace for which my soul is hankering seems under present circumstances to be wholly out of the range of practical politics Therefore, as I was telling you, I do not know how many days more I am destined to live '

Then after a pause Mahatmaji said,—"Notwithstanding my weakness I shall be in a condition to conduct *Young India* as well as I have been doing But in the second week my strength will fail me Even then I hope to be able to dictate to you some matter for the press I would, however, ask you to write to Satish Babu" (Mr Mukerji) "and tell him that it would be a help if he could send some matter for the second week After that, if he should take charge of *Young India* I should be happy and feel relieved

of all anxiety He may
is now, or from the *As*
venient to come down.
insight into the funda
movement. The second
consciousness"

Finally he said—"
I replied—"You need not

CHAPTER XXIII

PEACE RESTORED

When the idea got hold of the minds of Mahatmaji's co-adjutors that he had definitely resolved upon leaving his body, and that the fast had that object only in view, their feelings might better be imagined than described Leaders like Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Maulana Azad Sobhani, Mr Shankerlal Banker and Mr Bharucha lost no time in throwing themselves heart and soul into one mighty effort at peace. They hurried to wherever there were preparations for fighting, or rioting and carnage were in progress, and regardless of their lives they plunged into the very midst of infuriated mobs. Every one of them had to receive on his or her person hurts, but they were totally indifferent to what happened to them They were resolved, come what might to themselves, to bring about the restoration of peace, in order that Mahatmaji's life might be spared Maulana Azad Sobhani had gone out and been assaulted by a body of Parsis The moment he returned, news reached us that rioting was being hatched by mill-hands in another part of the city. Straightway he left us to meet them and if possible prevent the rioting About the Maulana Saheb's deep learning and erudition we had not the slightest doubt, but up till the riots we had hardly imagined that he combined with them an equal measure of fearlessness and capacity for hard labour The truth of the matter is that until we see a man confronting difficulties, we cannot truly measure his latent powers and real worth.

Once again, news reached our ears that a body of armed Parsis had surrounded Mr Shankerlal and had him in their grip, and that, in fact, there were no chances of his escaping with his life We were all so perturbed, but Mahatmaji remained quite unaffected The state of torturing suspense in which we passed almost every minute of our time is indescribable What was our relief when by God's grace a short while after, we found Mr Shankerlal coming back amongst us, all smiles, with not a scratch on his body! The Parsi rioters had indeed surrounded him and were about to fall upon him So finding that death was certain Mr Shankerlal made no efforts to save himself, but laid himself down on the earth prostrate and kept on shrieking That was the situation to which he was reduced and yet the rioters laid not a single violent hand on him but after a time let him go scot-free. Shankerlal's grief and remorse knew no bounds on account of these riots He it was that had sent telegram after telegram to Mahatmaji and had brought him down to Bombay, against Mahatmaji's own inclinations And now, should Mahatmaji fast himself to death as a penance, how was it possible for Shankerlal to drag on a physical existence? Once when Mahatmaji was all by himself, Shankerlal went up to him weeping and with clasped hands unbosomed himself thus "Do thou have mercy on us, master! Be not so cruel! We also are resolved to lay down our lives in order that the riots may cease! Do thou, therefore, have mercy on us and design to take some nourishment to keep up your body." Mahatmaji uttered not a word in reply, but with a stern look and shaking his head expressed his disapproval

And what shall I say of Mrs Sarojini Naidu's daring?

Time after time she would go out amongst the rioters in the different areas of disturbance, and coming back each time, she would relate to Mahatmaji with appropriate postures and gestures her personal exploits, not forgetting to give a dramatic picture of the acts of cowardliness of which some others might have been guilty Thus, she of them all could occasionally bring in a ray of smile on Mahatmaji's lips, even in the midst of all his grief and anxiety

Lastly, about Mr Bharucha His gentleness, his humility, his tender-heartedness were beyond compare But his tirelessness surpassed everything Driving his car with the speed of an arrow, he would again and again make a tour of the whole city, visiting every affected area, and would return to report to Mahatmaji as soon as he had finished one such tour Thus he would be coming and going, now announcing, "Bhindi Bazar quiet', now "Poydhuni, quiet, now "Dhobitalao quiet" now "Madanpura, quiet", and so on, and so on And every time after breaking the news he would in all humility ask, "Any further orders, please', and would not go out keep standing with clasped hands, awaiting orders Mahatmaji would merely smile at him, and indicate to him by gesture that for him (Mahatmaji) there were no 'orders" to give And now, with all possible deference and with the utmost self-restraint, Mr Bharucha would take leave of Mahatmaji, drawing back step by step, and bowing low in right oriental style, as when retiring from the presence of an oriental monarch, and then he would hie away, to survey and note the state of things prevailing in the other parts of the city

In the meantime Mahatmaji's appeal to the "Men and

Women of Bombay", which had been issued and distributed broadcast among the populace, seemed to have borne some fruit, as was evident from their attitude on the next succeeding day For on that day since early morning, party after party of people were seen coming and assembling on the road in front of Mahatmaji's residence, the one prayer on their lips being—"Please to break your fast'

Resulting from the appeal, there was a joint conference of a large body of representatives of the Parsi, Mussalman and Hindu communities, which met that morning in Mahatmaji's room to consider the best means of restoring peace to the city After much disputation and argumentation, it was finally resolved at Mahatmaji's suggestion that because the Parsis were numerically small and as a community weak, they should be given the authority to decide on the conditions of peace, which the Hindus and Muslims should accept without further discussion and without demur Thus did Mahatmaji lay the whole burden of judging and determining the final terms of peace on the shoulders of the Parsis So far as the Hindus were concerned they had no special objection to Mahatmaji's suggestion, but the Muslim representatives did not seem quite prepared to accept it Mahatmaji had made the Mussalmans primarily responsible for the disturbances, and this had already given rise to some little disaffection in their ranks However in the end Mahatmaji's decision was assented to and accepted unanimously.

In the afternoon, the city witnessed the unique sight of two large motor lorries (usually used to carry goods) filled

with representatives of the four great communities of Bombay, Parsi, Christian, Muslim and Hindu, going round and visiting every quarter of the city, and of their occupants proclaiming the glad tidings of peace and goodwill. The Parsis were thoroughly won over Whatever traces there were of ill-will, or a desire for revenge in their breasts were all wiped out when Mahatmaji gave them the supreme authority to determine the final terms of peace Only the day before, members of hostile communities had been breaking each other's heads at sight, and now to-day, representatives of the very same communities joined in a common cause were unitedly touring the whole city holding aloft the banner of peace Such a sight unique of its kind sent a thrill of joy and exultation through the hearts of the citizens of Bombay, and cries of "Jai Mahatma Gandhi-ki-Jai,"—'victory to Mahatma Gandhi" rent the air What other hands could have wrought such a miracle? Having taken upon himself the whole responsibility for the rioting and bloodshed, Mahatmaji had offered his body as a sacrifice in expiation thereof Thus was it that as by a miracle he had succeeded in quenching the rising flames of accumulated passion and hatred that had well-nigh overspread the whole sky of Bombay

The news of the restoration of peace was hailed with delight everywhere throughout the city, and the leaders were returning in the very same lorries to announce to Mahatmaji the happy news It was a little before sundown when they arrived near Mahatmaji's quarters. The deep, resounding noise of the lorries and the loud cheering sent up by the returning leaders combined to set up such a tumultuous roar that Mahatmaji mistook the same for the near approach

of a band of Parsi youths out to wreak their vengeance on his devoted head He was so glad at this that his body swayed to and fro in sheer joy, and with a divine smile lighting up his countenance he expressed his delight in the following words —"That's right That's right, indeed ! When the Parsi youths should arrive and demand Gandhi's head, I would instantly come out and give myself up " A thrill of horror passed through our frames as we heard these words uttered with so much zest, and we could only then realise with what consuming ardour he was craving to meet Death as a sacrifice It had hardly been possible for us to conceive of the cruel pain that was tearing his heart to pieces If all feelings of ill-will towards you should have to be stamped out of your enemy's breast, if, indeed, he should have to be completely won over and made your very own, you must willingly submit to be maltreated by him, and if need be, you must cheerfully submit to be done to death by him Under the inspiration of this great truth has Mahatmaji guided his life, and this it is that has made him an irresistible, world-wide force In South Africa he had given practical proofs of this faith in him to an extent hardly conceivable The anger of the Parsi community would be quenched in his blood if the Parsi youths came and broke his head, and that also would expiate his guilt,—such thoughts as these cheered his spirits and buoyed him up beyond measure I hurried forward in dismay towards the verandah, but saw that Providence in His Infinite Mercy had sent out His blessings and not danger It was the divine flag of peace which the leaders of all parties had been bearing in their hands with such demonstrations of tumultuous enthusiasm, and it was they

who had now returned to present their message of peace to Mahatmaji

Following on the communal leaders tour round the city, all minor disturbances, and stray incidents of shootin g ceased automatically Mr Chhotani, President of the Central Khilafat Committee, who was absent from Bombay for a time had now returned He came to visit Mahatmaji, and learning that it was the fourth day of his fast, he said to Mahatmaji —"You rest assured that I shall be able to stop the rioting in no time You do take some nourishment If you don't do so by to-morrow morning, I shall come and force it down your throat" Mahatmaji merely smiled at this manifestation of affection on the part of Mr Chhotani, but said not a word in reply

At nightfall rioting was about to break out at two places At one place, the military with charged rifles stood at attention, awaiting the final order to fire on a body of Hindu and Mussalman rioters At that critical moment, Mr Shankerlal and some others hurrying up to the spot successfully pleaded with the English officer in charge to give them five minutes' breathing time, within which, with the exercise of great tact, they were able to prevail with the mob and move them away At the other place, the rioters surrenderd their poles, clubs and other weapons of offence, as soon as the news of the restoration of peace was brought to them by Mr Shankerlal and his party Mr Shankerlal like a conquering hero returned, with his car filled with those poles etc , and as an ocular demonstration of peace restored, made a heap of them in Mahatmaji's own room At nine in the evening a Parsi gentleman came to report that a considerable body of mill-

hands had invaded their quarter, and that lawlessness might begin any moment As soon as the news was heard, Maulana Azad Sobhani, Mrs Sorojini Naidu and Mr. Umar Sobhani went off and came back after they had succeeded in pacifying the mob Again, at eleven in the night, another Parsi gentleman came in and appealed for the services of some volunteers Instantly, in two overcrowded cars some fifteen to twenty volunteers left for the scene of disturbance, from whence no further trouble was reported At six next morning (21st November), one of our volunteers came with the news that he had gone among the people and his information was that the night had passed off quite peacefully There had been no disturbances anywhere and that everybody had accepted the terms of settlement Only among the Marathas were there some lingering traces of resentment If they could be pacified, there was no further fear of trouble anywhere to-day The riots had begun as a most unwarranted attack upon the Parsis, and a thirst for vengeance had therefore been most deeply roused in their hearts It was Mahatmaji's patience, kindness, sympathy and magnanimity alone that succeeded in allaying that bitterness of spirit which like poison had been creating havoc among the whole community The number of casualties, according to the official report, was 58 killed (53 Hindus and Mussalmans), and 381 wounded (298 Hindus and Mussalmans). According to the same report there was rioting at 130 different places, four liquor shops were burnt down, while 137 of them were smashed. Besides many tram and motor cars etc, were either wholly destroyed or seriously damaged.

CHAPTER XXIV

FAST BROKEN

Sometimes one finds individuals laid up with high fever, who would in a state of delirium indulge in hallucinations and incoherent speech Here at Bombay, this time I saw that as in the case of an individual, so also in the case of a whole body of people, is it possible to enact under the stress of a collective mental obsession all sorts of wild scenes of frenzied violence This malady of the soul which had laid its mortal grip on whole classes of people was treated by Mahatmaji with such consummate skill that it began to elicit unceasing and universal praise An old Parsi lady who came to report that her son's shop had been pillaged and that he had lost his all, left Mahatmaji while in the act of offering her blessings with uplifted hands for Mahatmaji's wonderful attitude towards her community At this time also a Parsi young man, hardly in a normal frame of mind, came in leaning upon the shoulders of two friends Falling at Mahatmaji's feet, he touched them, and then rose and stood awhile with clasped hands, quivering with emotion For two or three consecutive days did the same youth come to our place in that abstracted state of mind, desiring to pay his heart's homage to Mahatmaji But Mahatmaji would not even lift up his eyes, he would have better appreciated the young man if he could have curbed the exuberance of his emotions

According to previous arrangement, the Working Committee was to meet at Surat on the 23rd November.

But these several days' fasting had so told upon Mahatmaji's strength that he could not possibly leave Bombay at this time. Besides, it was necessary for him to stay in Bombay for a few days longer in order to watch if there was going to be any further turn in the situation. So on the night of Sunday, the 20th, Mahatmaji sent a message through Mr. Dayalji of Surat, requesting the members of the Working Committee to come to Bombay for the meeting. On Mr. Shankerlal devolved the task of arranging for the proper accommodation of Lala Lajpat Rai, Pandit Motilalji, Mr. C. R. Das, and other members who were expected to attend the Working Committee. At 9 P. M. Mahatmaji summoned me to massage his legs. Then, he said,—"To-morrow is my day of silence, or else I would dictate something for *Young India* to you. I am so weak, it will be rather difficult to sit up and write. However, you get up early next morning and keep everything ready for writing." This said, he began his Monday's silence. Finding him so enfeebled I laid myself down near him for the night, and rising at 4-30 in the morning arranged his seat and the writing materials for him. It was past five when he woke from his sleep, and sitting up he went on writing his articles without intermission till 8 A. M.

Monday (21st November) saw peace completely restored throughout the city. The mill hands went back to their work in their respective factories, while tramcars, motor cars and other conveyances began to ply as usual. Normal conditions having been restored on Monday, the leaders of all the different communities in the city now approached Mahatmaji with a most pressing request that he should break his fast. There was no end to Mr. Chhotani's loving

admonitions He came and went a number of times, each time repeating his threat that he was not going to wait any further, but that he would take the law into his own hands and force nourishment down Mahatmaji's throat In the evening came a number of Parsi gentlemen, and soon after, at nightfall, two Europeans They repeatedly requested him to break his fast They were profuse in their praises of Mahatmaji, which one could easily see came from the bottom of their hearts, for the way in which by sheer weight of his transparent honesty sincerity and broad-minded sympathy he had succeeded so readily in quenching the rising flames of anarchy After they had left, it was finally resolved that the next morning (22nd November), i e, on the sixth day following on the outbreak, the leading representatives of the different religious communities and political parties,--Hindus, Moslems, Parsis, Christians Co-operators and Non co-operators— all should meet Mahatmaji at a friendly gathering and join in a Peace Breakfast, when Mahatmaji was to break his fast, the restoration of peace having become now an accomplished fact Mahatmaji, however, on his part, laid down one condition He would agree to break his fast only on the collective assurance of the leaders assembled that they would hold themselves responsible for the preservation of peace in the city

On the 22nd November, which was the fifth day of Mahatmaji's fast, I had thought that he would be too weak to take up any important work Nevertheless, he rose punctually at half past four in the morning and took to writing as usual Remembering that he was to break his fast in the early part of that day, he just made a passing remark to himself,—'I am quite at ease now, I am enjoying

peace within But the moment I break my fast I shall be plunging into a stormy ocean of pain and misery at the sight of surrounding woe."

At 8-30 in the morning, at a house at the Chowpatty crossing, close to Mahatmaji's residence, was held the Peace Breakfast meeting Co-operators and Non-co-operators, Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians and Parsis—all attended The representatives of the different communities stood up, one after another, to express their joy and gratification at the end of their anxieties and fears, now that peace had been actually restored At the conclusion, Mahatmaji read out his address written in Gujarati, after which at the earnest solicitation of the whole party, he broke his fast by partaking of a few grapes and only one orange The Gujarati address was Mahatmaji's own translation from one in English which had been composed by him for publication. This famous address of his is best understood and appreciated in the light of the events and circumstances inspiring its production It is given below in full —

"Friends,

"It delights my heart to see Hindus, Mussalmans, Parsis and Christians met together in this little assembly I hope that our frugal fruit-repast of this morning will be a sign of our permanent friendship Though a born optimist, I am not in the habit of building castles in the air. This meeting, therefore, cannot deceive me. We shall be able to realise the hope of permanent friendship between all communities, only if we who have assembled together incessantly strive to build it up. I am breaking my fast upon the strength of your assurance I have not been

unmindful of the affection with which innumerable friends have surrounded me during these four days I shall ever remain grateful to them Being drawn by them I am plunging into this stormy ocean out of the haven of peace in which I have been during these few days I assure you that, in spite of the tales of misery that have been poured into my ears, I have enjoyed peace because of a hungry stomach I know that I cannot enjoy it after breaking the fast I am too human not to be touched by the sorrows of others, and when I find no remedy for alleviating them, my human nature so agitates me that I pine to embrace death like a long-lost, dear friend Therefore, I warn all the friends here that, if real peace is not established in Bombay and if disturbances break out again, and if as a result they find me driven to a still severer ordeal, they must not be surprised or troubled If they have any doubt about peace having been established, if each community has still bitterness of feeling and suspicion, and if we are all not prepared to forget and forgive past wrongs, I would much rather that they did not press me to break the fast Such a restraint I would regard as a test of true friendship

"I venture to saddle special responsibility upon Hindus and Mussalmans The majority of them are non co-operators Non-violence is the creed they have accepted for the time being They have the strength of numbers They can stand, in spite of the opposition of smaller communities, without Government aid. If, therefore, they will remain friendly and charitable towards the smaller communities, all will be well I will beseech the Parsis, the Christians, and the Jews to bear in mind the new awakening in India. They will see many coloured waters in the ocean of Hindu or

Mussalman humanity They will see dirty waters on the shore I would ask them to bear with their Hindu or Mussalman neighbours who may misbehave with them, and immediately report to the Hindu and Mussalman leaders through their own leaders, with a view to getting justice. Indeed, I am hoping that as a result of the unfortunate discord, a Mahajan* will come into being for the disposal of all inter-racial disputes

"The value of this assembly in my opinion, consists in the fact that, worshippers of the same one God, we are enabled to partake of this harmless repast together, in spite of our differences of opinion We have not assembled with the object to-day of reducing such differences,—certainly not of surrendering a single principle we may hold dear,--but we have met in order to demonstrate that we can remain true to our principles, and yet also remain free from ill will towards one another "

"May God bless our effort

There is one feature of this restoration of peace that requires to be specially brought out The fact has been already adverted to that the Peace Breakfast meeting was graced by the presence of leaders without distinction of religious or party labels, which undoubtedly added to the greatness and significance of the occasion There were co-operators as well as non-co-operators present, there were Hindus and Musalmans as well as Parsis and Christians The truth is that the leaders of all the different communities had thrown themselves heart and soul into this work of peace making, and it was only through their mutual goodwill and

* An Arbitration Board composed of elders

co-operation that it became possible to bring back peace so quickly and by non-violent methods alone It would be hardly fair to say that the whole credit belonged to the non-co-operators On this point the evidence of Mahatmaji is clear and unequivocal —

"The credit for restoration of peace is not claimed for non-co-operators alone I claim it for both co-operators and non co-operators, for Hindus, Musalmans, Parsis and Christians, including Englishmen If all the peace-loving citizens had not joined, order could not have been restored I claim the credit for Mian Chhotani On the 20th instant, but for Sir Pheroze Sethna who succeesed in inducing the military to stay their hand, a crowd would have been fired upon, whereas it was dispersed within five minutes by the efforts of Dr Pavri and Mr Shankerlal Banker I can multiply instances of such dispersal on behalf of the citizens, irrespective of creed or party Mrs Sarojini Naidu was often asked by the military to help disperse crowds. Indeed if co-operating and non co-operating Parsis had not helped, it would have been impossible to restore peace At the Peace Breakfast it was Mr H P Modi who claimed the credit for the citizens Mr Natarajan too gave unstinted praise to those who had brought about the much-desired peace Mr K T Paul and Mr Douglas did no less" *

* See *Young India* for December 1, 1921

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